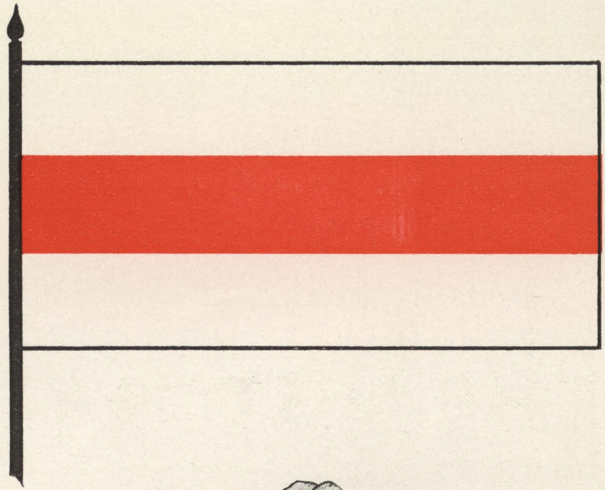
Vielmi Pavažanamu

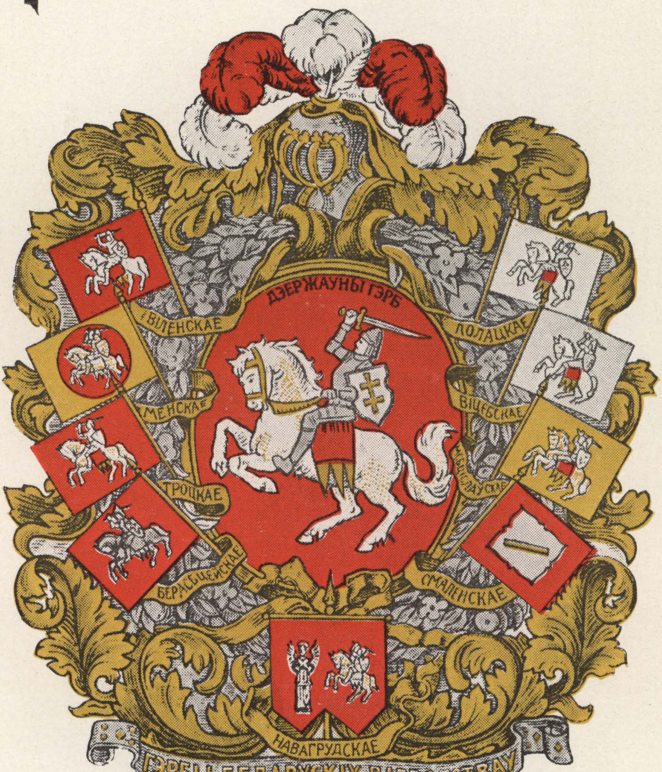
hasp. Iharu Ščorsu

ad autara

London, 25 sakavika 1961.

FRAGMENTS FROM THE HISTORY OF BYELORUSSIA





Беларускі Нацыянальны Сьцяг і Дзяржаўны герб Беларускай Народнай Рэспублікі (пасярэдзіне) з гербамі некатарых былых удзельных беларускіх княстваў (пабакох).

Byelorussian National emblems.

FRAGMENTS
FROM
THE HISTORY
OF
BYELORUSSIA
(To 1700)

MATERIAL FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH
AND STUDY OF THE SUBJECT
BY

PROF. R. OSTROWSKI

BYELORUSSIAN CENTRAL COUNCIL
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PREFACE

As far as remote antiquities are involved in the same darkness with those of other nations, a calamity peculiar to the Byelorussian (White Russian) nation has thrown almost an equal obscurity over even more recent events.

This was occasioned by the malicious imperialistic policies of Polish and Russian governments. To justify their imperialistic expansion they call in question the existence of the Byelorussian nation; pretending that the Byelorussian territory historically was always part of Poland or Russia (Muscovy).

In order to establish their claim, they seized the archives, they ransacked churches and monasteries, and getting possession, by force or fraud, of many historical monuments, which tended to prove the antiquity or freedom of the Byelorussian nation, they carried some of them into Poland or Russia, and commanded the rest to be burned.

We learned, for example, from "The Cambridge History of Poland" (Vol. 1, 1950, p. 164), that John Dlugosz (Longinus–1415-1486) was one who for the first time set before the world an account of Poland's history "in a language and style that was accessable and attractive to the educated people of Europe."

It is of great interest, however, that after the appearance of his twelve books in Latin **many old documents from "his unusual collection have perished" except his own work.** [Dlugosz was a tutor to the Royal Court and had easy access to all existing libraries of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland.] Due to his prejudice and unscientific historiography and his Polish chauvinism

he has been subjected to more criticism than any historian of that time.

A universal oblivion of past history might have been the effect of this fatal event, but some imperfect chronicles had escaped those malicious hands; foreign writers had recorded some important facts relating to Byelorussia; and the traditions concerning recent occurances were fresh and worthy of credit. These broken fragments are collected now with a pious industry, and from them gleaned materials which in future may be formed into a regular history of the Byelorussian nation.

London, February 22, 1961. C. Cooke.

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ERRATA

Page 15, line 35. For "mining" read "meaning".
Page 16, line 30. For "chavinistic" read "chauvinistic".
Page 17, line 39. For "in 1774" read "of 1744".
Page 42, line 31. For "Golubvsky" read "Golubovsky".
Page 64, line 16. For "were set the" read "were set upon the".
Page 65, line 12. For "parliamet" read "parliament".
Page 67, line 22. For "Engand" read "England".
Page 84, line 37. For "writters" read "writers".
Page 88, line 18. For "abvisers" read "advisers".

INTRODUCTION

The extent of territory which the different states and nations have held at different times in history and different boundaries which the same country has had and the different meanings in which the same name has been used, very often is a source of certain confusion in the minds of not only ordinary readers but also of quite reputable historians of our times.

It is of great importance carefully to make these distinctions, because great mistakes as to the facts of history are often caused through men thinking and speaking as if the names of different countries, say for instance Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Poland and Russia have always meant exactly the same extent of territory.

The borders of Lithuania, Poland and Russia have greatly changed at different times, and forgetfulnes of this has led to many misunderstandings in reading the history of those countries.

Political divisions of the ethnical regions must be also taken into account. In this way we shall always see what was the meaning of any geographical or political name at any particular time, and we shall thus avoid mistakes, some of which have often led to really important practical consequences.

This omission could cause special difficulties in understanding the subject, especially when later conquerors and subjugators of Byelorussia (Moscovites and Poles) after seizing, plundering and destroying the majority of her monuments, manuscripts and documents of historical value and importance, systematically tried to obscure and falsify the remaining ones. To complicate matters further,

both the Moscovites and the Poles deliberately used highly confusing terminology such as 'rossiyskiy' for 'Russian' i.e. Great Russian, and 'russkiy' for 'Rus' (a name with a much wider meaning which had been applied to all Eastern Slavonic nations, generally called «Rus'es», and the territory inhabited by them).

It is worth-while to point out the Old English usage of the word «Rus» by quoting some lines from Chaucer's description of the adventures of Henry IV of England (1367 - 1413) who joined the 'crusade' of the Teutonic Knights against the Grand Duchy of Lettow (Lithuania) in 1390.

> A Knight ther was, and that a worthy man,
> That fro the tyme that he first bigan
> To ryden out, he loved chivalrye,
> Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.
> Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
> And therto hadde he riden-no man ferre-
> As wel in Cristendom as hethenesse,
> And ever honoured for his worthinesse.
> At Alisaundre he was, whan it was wonne;
> Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne
> Aboven alle naciouns in Pruce,
> In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce.
> No Cristen man so ofte of his degree. *

Here the word 'Rus' (Ruce) was used in a general sense but not the word 'Russia'.

The term 'Rus', however had no counterpart to it in any Western language and was substituted, until recently, by the term 'Russia' which is very inaccurate. The term 'Russia' applied to Kievan State, to Polotsk and Novgorod States or Muscovy under the Tartar Yoke, to Russian Empire of Peter the Great and to present day 'Russia' has led and still leads to many misconceptions and to general confusion in the historical literature. On top of that adjective 'Russian' should be used only to Russia but never to «RUS» which will be for example the Rus

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* 'THE CANTERBURY TALES OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER'-THE PROLOGUE-KNIGHT. PUBLISHED BY THE MEDICI SOCIETY LTD., LONDON, 1929.

language, Rus people or Rus'es and so on.

The word 'Russia' without any adjective but with its **present** meaning was unknown in English terminology before the eighteenth century. Russia, as we know her to-day, was called 'Muscovy' or 'Moscovia'. If there was need for a more precise description of any particular people or territory an additional descriptive word was used for example Kievan Rus, Polotian Rus, Moscovian Rus and others. The name 'Byela Rus' (Byelorussia) meant territory with a number of principalities and people quite distinct from other Ruses (Muscovites, Novgrodians and Ukrainians). In Latin documents of the Middle ages the word used was 'Russia Alba' and occasionally 'Ruthenia Alba'.

Thus Europe is a strictly geographical name; Lithuania, Byelorussia, Ukraine, Poland and Russia are names of parts of Europe, but Byelorussia, Ukraine and Russia are located in the territory of RUS; Lithuania and Poland – not.

'Rus' again is at present the geographical name of the territory and Byelorussia (White Russia) is part of it, similar to: 'Red Russia', 'Black Russia', 'Muscovy' (later called Great Russia or simply Russia), Volhynia, Podolia and Ukraine. The names of Lithuania, Byelorussia, Ukraine, Poland and Russia are connected with the peoples occupying the territory, and the character of the names is rather political. They became the names of states whose boundaries have greatly varied, and which have sometimes formed separate government and sometimes have been joined together.

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, or as it is called sometimes more fitly - the Rus-Lithuanian State, is a political name and indicates one or more participants of this common state of the Lithuanians and the Rus'es (strictly speaking – Byelorussians and Ukrainians). Russia with its present mining at the time in question, as we already have mentioned, was called Muscovy and was both politically and economically wholly a fief of Tartar Horde, subjected to all the conditions of feudal tenure.

Unfortunately very often the names were given to a certain space on the map one time after its inhabitants

or another time after its government at any particular time. But mostly names like Poland, or Grand Duchy of Lithuania are used to mean the territory to which they were politically applied at the time of which we may be speaking, a territory which has been greater and less at different times. Thus the cities of Minsk and Pinsk have always been in Byelorussia since they were built. They have sometimes been in Grand Duchy of Lithuania, sometimes—in Poland and sometimes—in Russia (with its modern meaning) according to political changes.

In Eastern Europe, as in some other parts of Europe, we see a land which has taken the name from a people to which it does not owe its historic importance.

Lithuania has won for itself a position in Europe altogether out of proportion to its size and population. But it has not done this by virtue of its strictly Lithuanian element who was ten times smaller in number than the bulk of the population of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It must be remembered that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was by speech and manner five sixths Byelorussian (White Russian). The greatness of the name Lithuania was due to the fact that part of Rus territory gradually took this name and its inhabitants took the name of Lithuanians, in its political sense.

Today we can observe certain similarity when all citizens of Soviet Union are called Russians by many people who are not acquainted sufficiently with the subject.

Polish and Russian imperialistic forgers of the Byelorussian history are exploiting this complicated moment for their chavinistic ends and by all possible means try to force upon others their falsified version of history regarding that period. They juggle with the term 'Lithuania' in such a manner that once one has the impression, that Lithuania was a huge pagan state, and another time that it was a little pagan part of the enormous country of the 'Polish Commonwealth' or 'Holy Russian Empire'. Regarding the existence of such people as for example Byelorussians, they prefer to 'keep it dark' if it is possible.

Moscovian Princes, as well as Polish kings, were all to

some extent afflicted by megalomania. They used to include in their titles territories which never belonged to them. For instance, the Moscovian Grand Duke Ivan IV (The Terrible) used the title 'Tsar of all Rus' (Tsar vseya Rusi), whereas neither White Rus (Byelorussia) nor Kievan Rus (Ukraine) were at that period part of Muscovy as they formed a completely independent state, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Another example of this megalomania can be found in a book, written in Old Slavonic, entitled 'Act of the Apostles', which was published in 1564 and was one of the first books to be printed in Moscow. In this book Tsar Ivan Vasilievitch is called 'Tsar and Grand Duke of all Russia' and also 'Tsar and Grand Duke of all Rus'. *

Only at the end of the eighteenth century was Byelorussia conquered and included into the Russian Empire.

Simultaneously with the growth of Polish self-confidence, grew Polish intolerance, and Polish imperialistic appetite. The 'modest' official title of their kings shows this: 'With the Grace of God His most Gracious Majesty Sigismund III, King of Poland, Grand Duke of Lithuania, Russia, Prussia, Zhmudz, Inflant and other territories. Also with the Grace of God to the hereditary right of the Kingdom of Sweden, Goth, Vandals and the Grand Duke of Finland, etc.' ** There was hardly any country left in Europe that had not been 'subordinated' to the Polish Crown; at least on paper.

It is significant that when Poles speak of Yagellonian Poland, they mean the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania plus the territory of ethnographical Poland, and they very seldom call it the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth; more often they call it – Polish Commonwealth. This huge Union-State they describe as Poland, without mentioning that the number of Poles and ethnographical Polish territory consisted of only about one quarter of

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* 'FIVE HUNDRED YEARS OF PRINTING' BY S.H.STEINBERG, MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY R&R.CLARK LTD.; FIRST PUBLISHED 1955. P.19.

** PREFACE TO THE LITHUANIAN STATUTE IN 1744 AT VILNA. (IT CAN BE SEEN IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM).

the total 'input' into the union. They speak of the Polish frontier with Muscovy but they would never speak about, for example, the Lithuanian or Ruthenian frontier with Hungary or Germany.

Very often it is forgotten that the cultural contribution of the Byelorussian people to the union was very high, amounted to such value as the language of the royal court, the language of laws, administration and schools of the Grand Duchy. All that was intented to be destroyed later by the Polish carriers of "western civilization".

It happened also in the history when rulers of mighty German realm called themselves kings of the small Duchy of Prussia and assumed even name after the Prussians non-germanic race. So Muscovite half-Mongolian Tsar calls himself tsar of all the Rus'es and subsequently this huge Muscovite Empire assumes name of Russia.

The Old Prussian race was annihilated by culturally superior German conquerors. The truth is that, however hard the Polish and Mongolo-Russian oppressors tried to rob, to appropriate to themselves or to destroy cultural achievements of the Byelorussian people—they failed. The superiority of Byelorussian culture over the culture of their neighbours is easily visible even from those scant fragments of monuments of historical value, which are accessable today. In spite of the fact that the history of Byelorussian people is really also the history of their century's long bondage—the Byelorussian nation is still alive.

The people of Byelorussia have shown that they possess qualities and aptitudes which will ensure to them a future of potency, even of splendor, in the coming progress of the world.

All the while they have displayed a patience under humiliation in the persuit of ideal ends, which qualify them, if anything could, for national freedom.

The Soviet Russian government, by the policy of expansion and conquest, as well as by its maintenance of a large standing army, and its use of expensive modern armaments may succeed for yet other decades in diverting attention from internal questions and in playing be-

fore Europe and the United States the part of a great world power, but the collapse of military might of Soviet Russia will be none the less inevitable, which makes the cause of national independence, for all the peoples of the Soviet Union, so full of promise.

London, November 20, 1960. R.O.



[AS A SPECIMEN OF MODERN BYELORUSSIAN POETRY WE WILL HERE FIND SPACE FOR A SHORT POEM OF JANKA KUPALA, TRANSLATED BY LUBA U. TERPAK:]

J. KUPALA

TO COURT! *

To court, an international avenging court,
You pillaged and enslaved people go, report!

As equal human beings among equals go,
Your wrongs and tears and blood to all
the nations show!
In details tell of constant torture, mockery,
Of countless burial mounds and crosses they
can see!
And of the plundered graves remember to relate,
Where ravens your forefathers' bones dare violate!

How lords and kings wrung sweat from you
by their demands,
How cruel tzars deprived you of your native lands!

And how much blood you unchained slaves
have freely shed,
How in the futile fight the fields with
dead are spread!
How much your native land dismembered
by your foes,
How you, your children perish from the
tyrant's blows!
For judging by an international high court,
You pillaged and enslaved people go, report!

OCTOBER 29, 1918.

* REPRODUCED FROM 'BYELORUSSIAN REVIEW'. VOL. 3. MUNICH. 1956.

THE DAWN OF BYELORUSSIAN HISTORY

From geological excavations we can only roughly estimate the number of Slavonic tribes who settled in the Eastern part of Europe long before Christian Era. These tribes were first mentioned by the ancient Greek historian Herodotus in the fifth century before Christ. His descriptions of the tribes and of the geography of the region, which he probably visited himself, are important although very vague.

The information given by Herodotus was confirmed some centuries later by the Roman historian Tacitus, who lived in the second century A.D. According to him, the Byelorussian tribes (not actually called «Byelorussian» at this time), Radimichi, Krivichi, Drehovichi, Drevlanye, Severanye and Vyatichi had settled on both sides of the Western Dvina, Pripet, Sozh and Dnyepr rivers and in the vast territories between them, covered by forests and marshes. These tribes, known to ancient historians as Budines and Venedes, lived a primitive existence without any central organization.

A more accurate and vivid description of the customs and living conditions of these tribes, and of the territories they inhabited, was given by later historians of the ninth and tenth centuries. In 988 the Eastern Slavonic tribes were converted to Christianity. This baptism of «Ruses» (not Russians) sometimes was forced on the people wholesale, sometimes even with fire and sword.

On the other hand many people were converted of their own free will after listening to the preaching of monks, most of whom came from Constantinople and belonged to the Orthodox faith.

The clergy brought new cultural ideas and laws but the old customary methods of trial were still maintained. We should not assume that before their conversion to Christianity these people were savage barbarians. They were quite advanced in comparison with the conditions of life of some neighbouring peoples, especially in the East. At this period in the towns of each principality, there were well developed public institutions and social life. Trade was lively and trading expeditions, supported by the princes and their "druzhina" (formerly a body-guard of the prince) travelled down the rivers and reached as far as the Middle East and Western countries.

The most famous principalities were: Polotsk, Kiev, Smolensk, Turov, Vitebsk, Slutsk and Minsk (Myenesk).

THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE POLOTSK—SMOLENSK LAND *

The vast Polotsk Principality embraced the greater part of present-day Byelorussia, mainly the Western Dvina, the Nyemen, the Berezina and their tributaries. This territory was populated by forerunners of various Slavonic tribes chiefly: the Krivichi, Radimichi and Dregovichi, the present-day—Byelorussians.

The possessions of the Polotsk princes stretched almost up to the Gulf of Riga, where the Rus-ruled towns of Gertsike and Kukenois stood on the Western Dvina.

In contrast to the Smolensk Land, the Polotsk Principality boasted of several relatively large towns, among them Vitebsk and Minsk.

POLOTSK, its centre, is unquestionably one of the earliest Rus towns, whose beginnings go back to high antiquity. It was named after the Polota River, a tributary of the Western Dvina.

The early rise and prosperity of the town were due to its geographical situation. It stood where the upper reaches of the Berezina approach the Western Dvina.

This direct link between Polotsk and the basin of the

* ACCORDING TO M. TIKHOMIROV 'THE TOWNS OF ANCIENT RUS'. MOSCOW, 1959.

Berezina and the Dniepr explains its early intercourse with the Scandinavians, whose sagas repeatedly mention the town. This route along the Western Dvina up to Polotsk and on along the Berezina and the Dniepr to the Black Sea may well have been another variant of the famous route "from the Varangians to the Greeks." The waterway along the Western Dvina eastwards from Polotsk to Vitebsk and on to Smolensk, into the heart of Rus, was of still greater importance.

The history of the Polotsk Land is obscure and we have only a very faint idea of its political development. But the little we know suggests that Polotsk was one of the biggest towns of Rus. One is struck particularly by the prominence of the Polotsk princes in the 10th-12th centuries.

VITEBSK, the second biggest town in the Polotsk Land, is situated on the left bank of the Western Dvina where that river is nearest the Dniepr. Thus, Vitebsk was on the ancient route "from the Varangians to the Greeks." A direct road from Vitebsk to the south must initially have run to Orsha along a network of small rivers and lakes. Another route along the Kasplya led from the Western Dvina to Smolensk. The northern route to the Lovat ran along the Usvyat, and this was noted in the annals. Finally, the Western Dvina led from Vitebsk to Polotsk and then on to the Gulf of Riga.

After 1021, reports about Vitebsk do not occur until the second half of the 12th century, and in this its history is reminiscent of that of Smolensk. A revival on the trade route along the Western Dvina was immediately felt in Vitebsk. In 1165, the town came into the possession of the Smolensk princes. Subsequent events make it clear that the Polotsk princes did not relinquish their claims to Vitebsk. In 1180, it was once again ruled by Brachislav, a member of the Polotsk royal family. The town played a prominent part in the royal quarrels for the possession of the land.

The record of the second half of the 13th century and the early 14th century describe Vitebsk as a great town trading with Riga and the German towns.

USVYAT, was situated near the Western Dvina on the Usvyach River and Lake Usvyat, which gave the town its name in its various versions. It stood at the start of the portage between the Lovat and the Usvyach which empties into the Western Dvina.

Usvyat is first mentioned in the annals in 1021, together with Vitebsk.

There is scarcely enough information for us to judge of Usvyat's antiquities. We are only aware that a citadel was built in 1566, on the site of an earlier HORODISHCHE, called Mezhevo. There are many earthen memorials around the town, among them "man-made hills" on the eastern bank of Lake Usvyat, where it runs in a narrow channel to join Lake Uzmen.

The fact that the Usvyat district is densely populated suggests that it had a relatively big urban centre.

MINSK (Mensk or Menesk) was one of the most ancient towns in the Polotsk Land, and is situated at a distance from the Western Dvina and the Dniepr. It derived its name from the Menka River which empties into the Ptich near the town. In 1066, Minsk is first mentioned in the annals as a relatively big town.

The town is on a small river called the Svisloch, a right tributary of the Berezina. The upper reaches of that river lie near the Rybchanka and the Usha, both tributaries of the Vilia, This was apparently the ancient route from the Dniepr to the Niemen. It appears then that Minsk was a major portage point on the great route from Kiev to the shores of the Baltic Sea.

The earliest section of the town must have been situated in the area of Nizky Rynak where the excavations of 1950 revealed remains of walls known as Zamchishche. Traces of the first settlement in Zamchishche go back to the 11th century. Its cultural layer is very thin and is the site of a 12th-century stone temple. The very fact that a stone temple was built in Zamchishche shows that ancient Minsk was an important centre. The temple was very probably destroyed in the sack of the town in 1119. A gold bracelet made of three thick strands ending in a serpent's head, found in the excavations in the temple,

may have been fashioned by local jewellers. The thin 11th-century cultural layer in Zamchishche shows that it was the site only of the royal citadel surrounded by a «posad.»

DRUTSK (Drutesk),at present a small Byelorussian town, stands in the upper reaches of the Drut River, which gave it its name. It is first mentioned in 1092 among the Polotsk towns. In the events of the mid-12th century, Drutsk appears as one of the major towns of the Polotsk Land. What the town looked like is suggested by «traces of an earthen wall and a deep moat,» which may be seen on the island in the lake through which the Drut flows.* They are the remains of ancient Drutsk which derived its importance from the fact that the upper reaches of the Drut were very close to the rivers of the Western Dvina basin.

BORISOV, stands in the upper reaches of the Berezina, i.e., on the waterway from Kiev to Polotsk. It is first mentioned in 1102 in connection with the campaign of Boris Vseslavich agains the Yatvyagi.

LOHOYSK, or Logozhsk, is situated on the Gaina River where it was nearest to the upper reaches of some of the rivers that drain into the Vilia. The town and its people were first mentioned in 1128. Lohoysk apparently got its name from the Byelorussian word «loh»–a valley, for the town does lie in a valley surrounded by highland.†

IZYASLAVL was one of the most ancient towns of the Minsk area. According to a legend rehearsed in the annals it was built by Vladimir Svyatoslavich who named it in honour of his son Izyaslav, the founder of the Polotsk royal house. The town stands in the upper reaches of the Svisloch River which, as has been seen, led to the basin of the Vilia. Legend and invention aside, very little is known about this town in the 11th century. Highly authentic information about the town is given in the annals for 1127, in connection with the war between Mstislav Vladimirovich and the Polotsk princes. By that time

* V.P.SEMYONOV. 'RUSSIA'. VOL. IX. P.399.

† 'LAVRENTY ANNALS'. ST. PETERSBURG. 1872. P.239

Izyaslavl must have had a fortified citadel. There is mention of a lake, called the Rogneda, as well as of walls near the town. Tradition has it that the Church of the Transfiguration was built on the site of the Monastery of Rogneda, whose Christian name was Anastasia. This is plausible because cathedral churches in ancient towns were often named in honour of the Transfiguration but it is extremely difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction in these reports about Izyaslavl antiquities. In the 12th century it declined markedly and yielded its position to neighbouring Minsk.

GORODNO later known as Grodno, was another important town of the Polotsk Land, but reports in the annals about it are so fragmentary that at times it is hard to say which town they mean. It is mentioned in the "Ipaty Annals" in 1132 in an account of the campaign of the Kiev Prince Mstislav Vladimirovich against Lithuania together with "Vsevolod of Grodno." * It should be noted that later Byelorussian annals call it Horadnya, Horadzyen. The fact that its prince took part in the campaign against Lithuania is an indication that it stood very near that country. In 1127, the same Vsevolod campaigned against the Krivichi; his regiments proceeding from Turov, Vladimir Volhynski, Grodno and Klechesk.

Horadzen once again occurs in 1183 in connection with a conflagration when the entire town, including its stone church, was razed. ** The chronicler noted particularly the burning of the stone church. It is once again mentioned in 1253 and 1260.

Its name is of Byelorussian origin and may have sprung from the word "haradnya"–the abutment of a bridge or a section of a rampart. The town stands on the Nyemen and was possibly identified with the bridge across the river at that point. The existence of bridge abutments near the old town is indicated by the name Haradnichanka River which empties into the Nyemen nearby.

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* 'IPATY ANNALS', P.212, ACCORDING TO M.TIKHOMIROV 'THE TOWNS OF ANCIENT RUS'. MOSCOW. 1959, P.393.

** 'IPATY ANNALS', P.428.

The scarcity of the written records about Gorodno is redressed by archaeological materials, which describe the town as a sizable centre on the outskirts of Rus,

Numerous finds on the site reveal Grodno to have been a big industrial and commercial centre. Of particular interest are the moulds for casting "pseudo-grained beads, stellular pendants and ornamented rings" They show the existence in Grodno of craftsmen's workshops.

SMOLENSK, according to the primary chronicle, was a town of the Krivichi. The chronicles date its emergence to high antiquity; it is first mentioned in 882 as a town that had existed for some time. The Smolyanians were known not only in the upper reaches of the Dnyeper but also as far south as the Balkan Peninsula.

Smolensk is very conveniently situated on the Dnyeper where it runs close to the Kasplya, a tributary of the Western Dvina. It was the site of the ancient portage between the Dvina and the Dnyeper. In the south, Smolensk is near the upper reaches of the Sozh, which is a second waterway running parallel to the Dnyeper from north to south. The Dnyeper linked Smolensk with the Kiev Land and the Black Sea farther south. Thus, Smolensk stood on the great route "from the Varangians to the Greeks."

Smolensk was one of the oldest Rus towns and was known to Constantine Porphyrogenitus. The Gnyezdovo (now the Railway-Station near Katyn) burial ground testifies to its great political and economic importance in the 10th century, after which something hampered its development. Scattered 11th-century reports indicate that it did not in any way stand out among other towns.

The 11th century appears to have been unfavourable to the town's development, possibly the result of the decline of the route "from the Varangians to the Greeks." This in turn resulted in the decline of several towns along the Dnyeper. This explains why Smolensk was not prominent among other Rus towns in the 11th century. No wonder the chronicles report the late baptism of Smolensk, which allegedly took place only in 1013. Smolensk was slow in accepting the new faith.

The new prosperity in Smolensk was due to the revival of the trade route from the shores of the Baltic to Eastern Europe. And Smolensk flourished as a go-between in East-West trade, which is why its intercourse with Visby and the German towns became of such importance in its trade in the 12th-13th centuries. This is testified to by the various transcripts of Smolensk's well-known treaty with the Germans in 1229 and later.

Rus ties with Western Europe, mainly with Germany, were much more pronounced in Smolensk than elsewhere. This is admirably proved by the inscription on the gravestone of the monk Zinovy, discovered in the ruins of a cloister on the Smyadyn.

Extract from the Treaty (1229)
of Prince Mstislav Davidovitch of Smolensk
with Riga and the Gothic Coast:

...SHOULD LATIN MERCHANTS COME TO BLOWS AMONGST THEMSELVES IN THE LAND OF RUS..., THEY WILL SETTLE THE MATTER BETWEEN THEMSELVES ... SHOULD RUS MERCHANTS COME TO BLOWS AMONGST THEMSELVES EITHER IN RIGA OR ON THE GOTHIC SHORE, LATINS SHOULD NOT BE CONCERNED WITH THIS. THEY WILL SETTLE THE CASE AMONGST THEMSELVES...*

Ancient Smolensk, like other towns at that time, was made up of two sections: the town proper and the suburb. The report that Rostislav founded a great HOROD in Smolensk speaks of the vigorous building activities of that prince, who appears to have enlarged the initial HOROD. The stone churches as well as the rather numerous remains of stone churches in Smolensk give a reminder of its earlier importance. Their architectural style reveals features akin to Romanesque. The ruins of an unnamed church on the Rachevka River revealed Romanesque pilasters, but the marks on the bricks are similar to those found on the bricks of the Svirskaya Church. This fact argues the existence of links between Smolensk and Romanesque architecture,but scarcely warrants the assertion that Smolensk builders imitated Roman architects. The

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* 'A READER IN THE HISTORY OF THE EASTERN SLAVIC LANGUAGES' BY COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS, NEW YORK 1958, P.14.

fine Smolensk brick was made on the spot where a kiln dating from the 12th or 13th century was discovered.

Smolensk was a prominent cultural centre. Its architectural memorials, testify to development of its building industry. The Church of Saints Peter and Paul, the Svirskaya Church, and the Church of St. John the Apostle, are only a moiety of ancient Smolensk. Kliment Smolyatich, one of the most learned men of Ancient Rus, who later became Metropolitan of Kiev, worked in Smolensk. The «Life of Avraamy of Smolensk» is a remarkable memorial of Smolensk letters.

TOROPYETS, which stood on an island formed by the ice-free Toropa River, was the only other big town in that land. As it approaches the town, the Toropa forks and empties into a lake. It is remarkable that a section of the river between the «dzyetsinyets» and the suburb remains ice-free over a distance of a vyorst (about one km.) and freezes only for three days at the utmost in the bitterest frost. It must have been in that part of the river that the harbour of Toropyets was located.

In the middle of the 12th century, Toropyets was the second largest centre in Smolensk Land. The 1150 charter deed of the Smolensk diocese says that it paid 400 «grivnas» of tribute. («And there are four hundred 'grivnas' of tribute in Toropyets.») Its lake fisheries were of considerable importance. It had its own royal house, an indication that the town was somehow distinguished among the other populated localities of that land. In 1169, the people of Toropyets are mentioned on an equal footing with those of Polotsk and Smolensk, which shows that Toropyets was a developed urban centre. We find a hint at its «veche» activities in the chronicle's report about the campaign undertaken by the «people of Toropyets with Prince David» against the Lithuanians in 1225.

A number of Smolensk towns are mentioned in the charter deed of the Smolensk diocese, but the facts are so scattered that it is hard to define any of them as a sizable town. Besides, even in later times we fail to find any big urban centres in that land apart from Smolensk, Toropyets, Mstislavl and Roslavl.

TUROV, one of the most ancient Rus towns, stands near the confluence of the Strumyen and the Pripyat, not far from where the Sluch, flowing from the north, empties into the latter. This apparently explains Turov's early rise. The upper reaches of the Sluch are very near those of the Nyemen, which made Turov a point on the ancient trade route from Kiev to the shores of the Baltic Sea. The importance of this route is underscored by the fact that other Rus towns - Grodno and Slutsk-also stood on it.

The chronicler traces its name to a certain Tury, who, on the strength of the annals, is regarded as having arrived from overseas, like Rogvolod. But the text of the chronicle reads: «For Rogvolod had come from beyond the sea; and had his principate in Polotsk, and Tury in Turov, and it was after him that the Turovites were called.» In other words, the text merely says that Tury ruled Turov as Rogvolod did Polotsk, but says nothing about his arrival from beyond the sea. At all events, the name Tury is explained by the Slav «tur»–an aurochs.

Today, the Turov «horodishche» consists of two parts: the smaller and earlier part lies in the form of a triangle at the confluence of the Yazda and the Strumyen; the other part is adjacent to it and occupies the widening space between the two rivers. The two parts are separated by a moat 4.8 metres deep. This arrangement agrees with our ideas of towns in Ancient Rus. The smaller and better fortified part of Turov corresponds to the initial «dzyetinyets» later augmented by the larger territory of the suburb. *

PINSK is first mentioned in 1097 as a stout «horod» which had withstood a seven-week siege. Reports on Pinsk are extremely scanty and fragmentary. It derives its name from the Pina River, for it stands where the Strumyen joins the Pina. The site is highly advantageous, for it seems to be the centre on which converge the numerous rivers forming the Pripyat. In the chronicles, Pinsk is

* 'ZAPISKI ADDZIELU HUMANITARNYCH NAVUK' VOL. II. MINSK, 1930. P.373.

usually mentioned together with Turov and Berastsye. The Pinsk princes came into the limelight in the second half of the 13th century.

BERASTSYE, later Brest-Litovsk, stood further to the West. The name is of Slav origin being derived from the «berastsye»–birch bark. This town's importance was due to its situation on the Western Bug where the Mukhavyets River empties into it, and links it with the Pripyat River system. It is mentioned as early as 1019 and is regarded as the last Rus outpost facing the Polish land.

Its position on the outskirts made it vulnerable to attack and frequent seizure by neighbouring Poland. Tatishchev reports that a Polish campaign brought devastation to Berastsye in 1182. *

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* 'RUSSIAN HISTORY' BY V.N.TATISHCHEV. BOOK III. MOSCOW. 1774. P.247.

At the present time the name of «Berastsye» is very often distorted by Polish (Brześć) or Russian (Brest-Litovsk) transcriptions. In all old documents, however, its original name is preserved. As a proof of this we quote passage from the following manuscript:

++From letter of I.Paciej to Prince of Ostrog (1598)++
«...Ponievaž jeho korolevskaja miłość, o vsiom tom dostatočnuju spravu vziavšy, zaboronił nam toho synodu, pierviej pozvolenoho: khdyž by to nie synod, ale jakojeś zamiešańje byti musieło, jeśli by inoviercy mieli z nami takovyj synod otpravovati. Čoho niedavno śviežyj prikład u Bereści (BERASTSYE) pokazałsie... »

[The mist enveloping the history of 8th-century Rus because of the total absence of written sources, lifts in the 9th and 10th centuries when the testimony of the chronicles comes to our aid. Nevertheless, the number of ancient Rus cities cannot be established with any certitude even for that period, because our chief source of information, the chronicle, contains only scattered and vague data on the subject. Besides, it speaks, as a rule, only about the comparatively big urban centres, but small towns must have also existed at that time.]

THE GREAT PRINCIPALITY OF POLOTSK

The Great Principality of Polotsk had three important centres: Polotsk itself, Vitebsk and Minsk (Myenesk).

In ancient times Byelorussia was thus referred to as Polotian Rus. This principality was the strongest and most advanced among the Byelorussian principalities and should be regarded as the first Byelorussian State.

In the period of its highest development the Polotsk State included in the west all the western Byelorussian territories including: Vilna, Novogrodok, Slonim, Volkovysk, Grodno, Slutsk, Kletsk and other cities. With the exception of a few short interruptions, the Polotsk Principality remained an independent state. *

The same author says that in the middle of the ninth century, when the Byelorussian tribes were organized in their own separate states, the Normans appeared in Eastern Europe and shortly afterwards Kiev became their main center. Subsequently rulers of Kievan Rus started wars against Byelorussian princes, for example: Olga, the widow of Igor, who reigned at Kiev during the minority of her son Svyatoslav, made her name notorious for the perfidious cruelty with which she revenged the slaughter of her tyrant husband. Having horribly oppressed the Drevlyans, a Byelorussian tribe inhabiting the woods and marshes of the Pripyat, they lay in ambush for him; and Igor perished in the fray. To avert retribution and future dissensions, the people proposed the incorporation of their principality with that of Kiev, and

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* 'ETHNOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL TERRITORIES AND BOUNDARIES OF WHITERUTHENIA' BY DR. JOHN P.STANKIEVICH, NEW YORK,1953.

sent an embassy to Olga, saying «We have killed your husband because he plundered and devoured like a wolf; but our princes are good, and make our country thrive: come and marry our prince Male.» Olga pretended to receive the proposal with satisfaction, but had all the envoys put to death. Carefully concealing their fate, she required a second embassy of the most considerable men to be sent, to make arrangements for the union; and the second ambassadors shared the doom of the first. While still wearing a mask, she repaired in person to the Drevlyans with a numerous retinue; and, after assuring them of the safety of their countrymen, Prince Male and the chief families were invited to a solemn entertainment in honour of the alliance. In the midst of the festival they were all massacred. The infuriated woman then acted without disguise, let loose her army to butcher the terrified people, and laid siege to their principal town, Korosten. After long holding out it fell by stratagem. The inhabitants being offered an act of indemnity on condition of sending a certain number of pigeons as a sign of subjection, willingly complied. Upon receiving the birds, lighted matches were fastened to their tails at night and, being liberated, they flew back to their usual haunts to fire the wood-built town. It was reduced to ashes; and those who escaped the flames perished by the sword.

Having bathed in blood, and become familiar with horrors, the implacable widow determined to receive christian baptism,–a strange but not unnatural proceeding,– and repaired to Constantinople in 955, in order to have the ceremony performed in a manner as august as possible, by the hands of the patriarch himself. *

The reports of life in the 11th century are so fragmentary that what we know of Polotsk Land history concerns mainly the period from the 12th century. We have no information, however, regarding the origin of the first Byelorussian princes but we know that in the last quarter of the tenth century Prince Rogvolod (in the Scan-

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* ACCORDING TO 'RUSSIA: ITS RISE AND PROGRESS, TRAGEDIES AND REVOLUTIONS' BY THE REV. T. MILNER, M.A., LONDON, 1856, P. 7-9.

dinavian sagas known as Ragnvald) ruled over Polotsk. * [The legend that three Viking brothers were invited to rule over all Slavs seems doubtful because according to Nicon chronicle there is a statement to the effect that in the 9th century two Scandinavian knights, Ascold and Dir, raided Polotsk and wrecked havoc on its inhabitants. From this we can conclude that the people of Polotsk did not send the «invitation». It is true however that Nestor mentioned among Novgorodians, Chud and Veses also Kriviches as those seeking princes «who will rule over them and judge according to law», but we should know that territory occupied by the Krivichi tribes was only partly within the borders of Polotsk principality. It is possible, therefore, that Kriviches of Pskov who only in 1136 became independent from Novgorod, were mentioned in the chronicle in question.]

Prince ROGVOLOD was killed by Prince Vladimir of Kiev, who eventually married Rogvolod's daughter princess ROGNEDA (Ragnheid †). The son IZYASLAV (d. 1001), born to Rogneda, was the next ruler over Polotsk Principality. Kiev was ruled by Vladimir's son Yaroslav, born to a different mother. Existing enmity between two favorite wives of Prince Vladimir laid foundations to the bitter hostility between the princes of Polotsk and Kiev. «And since that time–says the chronicler–the grandchildren of Rogvolod raised the sword against the grandchildren of Yaroslav.» **

After the death of Prince Izyaslav the Polotsk Principality was ruled by his son BRACHESLAV who in connection with the war against Kiev prince Yaroslav the Wise, in 1021 concluded the treaty of peace and received from Yaroslav two towns Usvyat and Vitebsk. ***

Prince Bracheslav Izyaslavich was succeeded by his son VSESLAV who proved one of most able rulers of Polotian Rus. He is known in history under the name of

† IN SCANDINAVIAN.

* 'LAVRENTY ANNALS'. ST. PETERSBURG. 1872. P.226-27.

** IBID., P.284-85.

*** 'THE TOWNS OF ANCIENT RUS' BY M.TIKHOMIROV. MOSCOW.1959. P.387.

VSESLAV the Sorcerer (Charadzey) 1044-1101.

After the prolonged wars with the princes of Novgorod and of Kiev on the one hand and with Livonia on the other, Prince Vseslav managed to expand and enrich his principality. It was under him that no one dared to threaten «the formidable Polotians.» He earned respect and confidence not only among his own people, but even among dependent neighbouring princes, as the author of «The Story of the Expedition of Prince Igor» (Slovo o Polku Igorove) says that prince «Vseslav judged the people and distributed the towns to the princes.»

Polotsk is the oldest city in Byelorussia and was already mentioned in 862. The residence of bishops was established there as early as 992 and latest 1005. *

In Polotsk the oldest and most famous churches were built and it was there the center of bookmaking and learning. Already in the 11th century Polotsk was a spiritual capital of Byelorussian people, no wonder then that it was there Prince Vseslav erected (between 1044-1066) on the pattern of St. Sophia's churches in Kiev and Novgorod, famous St. Sophia Cathedral in Polotsk. The past history of this city is illuminated also by the church of the Saviour in Yefrosinia's Monastery and the ruins in Belchitsy. The precious cross which belonged to Princess Yefrosinia is a magnificent memorial of Polotsk art. It was made in 1161 by Lazar, known as Bogsha, apparently a local craftsman. **

Inscription on a Cross of Yefrosinia of Polotsk:

(THE TEXT IS GIVEN IN MODERN BYELORUSSIAN)

«U leta 6669 (h.zn. 1161) pakładaje Jefrasinia česny kryž u svaim manastyry carkvie śviatoha Spasa. Česnaje dreva nieacennaje jość, a akavańnie jaho zołata i srebra i kamieńnie i perły 100 hryvien, a da, . . 40 hryvien. Kab nikoli nia vynosiusia z manastyra, ni addavausia, ni pradavausia. Kali ž chto nie pasłu-

* SEE 'LAVRENTY ANNALS', ST. PETERSBURG. 1872. P.19, AND 'ST. YEFROSINIA-PRADSLAVA OF POLOTSK' (IN BYELORUSSIAN) BY REV. LEU HAROSHKA. PARIS, 1950.

** 'THE TOWNS OF ANCIENT RUS' BY M. TIKHOMIROV. MOSCOW. 1959, P. 385.

chajecca i vyniesie z manastyra, kab jamu nie uspamahau česny kryž ni u hetym žyćci, ni u budučym, i chaj budzie praklaty śviatoju i žyvatvorčaju Trojcaju i śviatymi 318 ajcami i siamju saborami śviatych ajcou, i chaj jaho spatkaje dola Judy, jaki pradau Chrysta. Chto advažycca zrabić heta. . .vialmoža ci kniaź, ci jepiskap ci ihumienia, ci luby inšy całaviek, chaj na im zbudziecca hetaje praklaćcio. Jefrasinia ž raba Chrystova, złyadziušaja hety kryž, pryjmie viečnaje žyćcio z usimi śviatymi." *

The remains of stone structures in Polotsk and its surroudings in Belchitsy, indicate the high level of its culture. Its written records have practically all perished, but that they had existed is proved by the remarkable "Life of the Polotsk Princess Yefrosinia." Excerpts of Polotsk letters have also been preserved in Tatishchev's "History of Russia" (the story of Svyatokhna, etc.) Songs extolling the feats of Vseslav of Polotsk have come down to us through the medium of Old Byelorussian epic lore "Słovo o połku Igorove" proves that they were sung as early as the 12th century.

Great Vseslav's aim was to unite all the Byelorussian lands of ancient Rus under his authority, and the city of Polotsk was intended to occupy the central position.

When Prince Vseslav entered Novgorod in 1066, he sent from there to Polotsk many pieces of art including the bells from the Church of St.Sophia of Novgorod. **

Prince Vseslav and his sons were very religious people and this circumstance was cunningly exploited by three brothers, princes of Kiev: Izyaslav, Vsevolod and Svyatoslav, sons of Prince Yaroslav the Wise of Kiev. Prince Vseslav was invited to come near Smolensk in order to settle some differences existing between the principalities of Polotsk and that of Kiev. It was after terrible mas-

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* 'ST.YEFROSINIA-PRADSLAVA OF POLOTSK' (IN BYELORUSSIAN) BY REV. LEU HAROSHKA. PARIS, 1950, P. 39.

**SEE NOVGORODSKAYA 1-YA LETOPIS, ED. OF 1888, P. 96, AND 'PRO IGORYA SEVERSKOGO, PRO ZYEMLU RUSKUYU', BY K.V.KUDRYASHOV, MOSCOW, 1959, P. 56.

sacre of the population of Menesk (1066) by three brothers Yaroslavichi: "The people of Menesk (Minsk) barricaded themselves in the town, but the brothers took Menesk, and killed the men, and carried off the women and children into captivity, and went towards the Nemiga." *

As an assurance of good will and honesty, meeting in 1067 was proceeded by taking oath on the cross. The Kiev princes, however, broke the oath, kidnapped Prince Vseslav of Polotsk with his two sons and incarcerated them in Kiev. Meanwhile, in Kiev itself, arose a general dissatisfaction towards the ruling princes and eventually uprising broke out on September 15, 1068, the Kievates rebelled against "those who bear false witness and perpetate injustice" Insurgents went to the bailey, where Prince Vseslav, treacherously captured by the Yaroslavichi was held prisoner and liberated him. The Kievates regarded Vseslav as a fitting candidate for the Kiev throne and immediately nominated him as their ruler.

The Kievan princes fled: Izyaslav, the oldest one, sought support from abroad and launched vigorous campaign against Vseslav who due to uncertainty of the situation and urged by immense love of his own principality, under cover of night, at the head of a small guard advanced in the direction of Belgorod on his way to beloved Polotsk. "He was called to Polotsk by the peal of bells from St. Sophia."– says chronicle.

Prince Vseslav died in 1101 and left seven sons: DAVID, ROMAN † 1116, GLEB † 1119, BORIS † 1128, ROGVOLOD † 1129, SVYATOSLAV and YURY-ROSTISLAV. **

Russian historian Tatishchev reports that in 1102 "BORIS VSESLAVICH of Polotsk campaigned against the Yatvyagi and upon his victorious return built the town of Borisov in his name, and settled it with people. ***

In conformity with contemporary customs the Principality of Polotsk underwent division first into Polotsk

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* 'LAVRENTY ANNALS'. ST. PETERSBURG. 1872. P.162.

** 'ST.YEFROSINIA PRADSLAVA OF POLOTSK' (IN BYELORUSSIAN) BY REV. LEU HAROSHKA. PARIS, 1950, P. 8.

*** 'RUSSIAN HISTORY' BY V.N.TATISHCHEV. BOOK II. MOSCOW. 1773. P.199.

and Minsk and then into several smaller principalities. Internal misunderstandings and quarrels among princes of Polotsk encouraged Kievan rulers to aggression. Prince Vladimir Monomakh of Kiev twice marched into the Polotsk Land against Prince Gleb Vseslavich of Minsk. Prince Vladimir of Kiev in a list of his feats mentioned the sack of the town in 1119: "We attacked the town and left neither man nor beast in it." * The second campaign of prince Monomakh against Minsk was less successful, he only "stood near Minsk". ** Generally speaking, Minsk played a prominent role in the wars between Kiev and the Polotsk princes, for it was outpost on the road from Kiev to Polotsk. Prince Gleb Vseslavich of Minsk was captured and died in captivity in 1119.

In 1127 Kievan Prince Mstislav managed somehow to capture three princes of Polotsk (David, Rostislav and Svyatoslav) together with their families, deported them to Tsargorod (Constantinople) as servants to Byzantine Emperor Ivan Kemnon, and installed in Polotsk his sons: first Izyaslav and then Svyatopolk. Reign of those two princes created general discontent and even revolt, the result of which Prince Svyatopolk was driven away and in his place was apointed grandson of Prince Vseslav – Vasilko Svyatoslavich(1132–1143). Then came to Polotsk as a ruler Rogvolod Borisovich, whom again dissatisfied people banished to Minsk. "In 1151 they took Rogvolod Borisovich, their prince, and sent him to Minsk, and held him in great want, and they led (Prince Rostislav) Glebovich (1151 - 1158) back with them..."; but in 1158 the people of Polotsk returned back their Prince Rogvolod Borisovich (1158-1161).

Under the circumstances the Polotsk people established custom of deposing princes as they saw fit. The chronicler has recorded the formula used by people of Polotsk to expel the princes: "He is deprived of us." ***

After the death of Prince Rogvolod Borisovich, the

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* 'LAVRENTY ANNALS', ST. PETERSBURG. 1872. P.239.

** IBID., P. 276.

*** IBID., P. 282-86. (QUOTED AFTER M.TIKHOMIROV.)

throne of Polotsk was occupied by his son Vseslav III (1191 - 1170). Period of rule by Vseslav III was marked by a tendency towards limitation of the power of princes, and eventually «Council of Elders» was established. This period is called «Republic of Polotsk» (1171 - 1180) and brought so many internal disturbances that in the end, by the decision of «veche», new Prince Vladimir Vseslavich (1180 - 1216) was invited to the throne of Polotsk.

During the reign of this prince trade relationship with the Baltic coast was developing very successfully. The German merchants from Riga were coming in great numbers to Smolensk and Polotsk. In 1210 Ludolf, «a wise and rich man from Smolensk», negotiated in Riga on behalf of Prince Vladimir of Polotsk. * At that time the possessions of the Polotsk princes stretched almost up to the gulf of Riga, where they ruled the towns of Kukenois and Gertsike on the Western Dvina.

In spite of the fact that not all the principalities were ruled by princes dependant on Polotsk – their cultural ties were never broken, and all the Byelorussian lands since times immemorial were presenting certain linguistic and cultural unity. This fact is especially apparent in regard to the Principality of Smolensk.

VECHE (VYECHA)

The prevailing form of government in the early period was known as the «UDYELNY system,» taking its name from the word UDYEL, meaning «share.» It may be described as a compromise between the Scandinavian practice of parceling out territories among members of the royal family, and the old Slav custom of common property in the family, with provision for the rule of the elder, but a compromise still further complicated by the right of primogeniture, or inheritance by the eldest son, imported from Byzantium. The central feature of the system or rather custom, for it depended wholly on compliance with usage – was the principle of possession and rule by the

* 'THE TOWNS OF ANCIENT RUS' BY M.TIKHOMIROV. MOSCOW.1959, P.379.

family of princes and their descendants. In the Slav view of the relations between the princes, the land might be divided and distributed belonged to the gens,—to all the members of the royal family,—and every prince was entitled to a «share» during his lifetime. This he could divide and transmit to his children in the male line. But the territories thus descending to the sons from the parent did not become their absolute property. That the princes could give up one «share» for another was provided by the system, and they did actually migrate from territory to territory. The occasion for changes of this kind was usually given by the succession of a new grand-prince to the throne. But actually to succeed to this power, to be a grand-prince, he had to be the eldest member at that time living in the whole family of princes. The princes, again, were not always agreed as to who was the eldest among them.

In the early days of the nation, when the princes were few, the working of the system was comparatively simple. But the increase in the number of the royal family soon made the satisfaction of the multifarious and conflicting demands thence arising a most difficult, almost an insoluble problem. *

The principalities were ruled by princes or dukes but their power was limited by the assembly of the community, usually of the town, called a «Vyecha», and thus formed a primitive type of democracy. The princes were elected for life by these assemblies; their power hardly ever absolute or their position hereditary, at least in the early stages of the development of the principalities as political units.

The development of the principalities and the growth of their cultural and political life was dependent on a number of historical events. One of the chief dependent factors was the ability of some princes to increase their power and authority by defeating neighbouring princes and seizing their territories after allowing the «druzhinas» to plunder the towns. Some princes had quite numerous

* SEE 'RUSSIA AND RUSSIANS' BY E.NOBLE. NEW YORK. 1901. PP. 30-33.

"druzhinas" which were not disbanded after military expeditions or wars.

The so-called KNYAZH DVOR (princely court) was the center of political and administrative activities in the towns. It was there that thieves caught red-handed in the night were brought for punishment, it was there that the prince and his TIUN mediated in disputes between townsfolk, and it was there too that the home guard gathered before setting out on a campaign. In short, the "knyazh dvor" or the dvor of PASADNIK, in smaller towns, was the civic center. But the development of the towns and the emergence of the LYUDI (the craftsmen and merchants) as a cohesive group of citizens, the so-called MUZHI, who had become aware of their civic status, tended gradually to limit the role of the prince.

The weakening of the princely power naturally led them to seek support in concord with the people and brought the people to the foreground. Although the vyecha was not created by the princes, they had perforce to apply to it. By the mid-12th century, for example, the princes of Polotsk were already dependent on the vyecha.

The vyecha formed some sort of the Supreme Council, or assembly, a kind of folkmote or peoples parliament. This form of folkmote existed in all parts of Byelorussia. At the time when the subjects had so far gained the upper hand of their ruler as to be able, by the imposition of conditions, to make his actions conform to their own will—the state of affairs resembled a "republic".

Later documents (13th and 14th cent.) describe Polotsk as a great commercial center carrying on lively intercourse with Riga. Its main exports were wax and honey, flax, bacon etc. A deed dating from the second half of the 13th century says that the people of Polotsk and of Vitebsk were granted "free trade rights in Riga, and the Gothic coast and in Luebeck." The document also mentions "the old peace" between the Polotsk Land and the German towns. * Inscribed stones, discovered on the West-

* 'RUSSKO-LIVONSKIYE AKTY'. P.13. SEE 'THE TOWNS OF ANCIENT RUS'. BY M.TIKHOMIROV. MOSCOW. 1959. P.385.

ern Dvina, testify to the maintenance of the water routes by the princes of Polotsk. *

The political role of the people of Polotsk was enhanced in the 12th century. Like the people of other big towns they "gather for the vyecha as for a council." **

Later we find a vyecha in Polotsk which functioned like its counterpart in Novgorod. A highly obscure and late report in the Byelorussian annals ascribes the inauguration of civic freedoms Prince Boris , who "was kind to his subjects and gave them freedom and allowed them to have a vyecha, and toll bells, and rule themselves as they did in Great Novgorod and in Pskov." After the death of Boris' children the people of Polotsk "began to rule themselves, as in Great Novgorod and in Pskov, and had no lord over them." ***

The general conclusions–according to M.Tikhomirov–on the development of vyecha activities in Polotsk are fully applicable to Smolensk, although its political history is very obscure. There is only one report, dated 1186, about an open clash between Prince David and the people of Smolensk: "At the same time there was a clash in Smolensk between Prince David and the Smolensk folk, and many heads of the best people rolled." The cause of the quarrel is unknown but it is highly probable that the prince had violated the civic freedoms which had become traditional long before the year mentioned. The charter deed of the Smolensk bishopric dating from 1151 says that the people of Smolensk took part in politics. It has the prince say: "Having consulted with my LYUDI, I brought the bishop to Smolensk" †

[Golubvsky is quite right in pointing out that our chronicles use the word "lyudi" to denote the people at large

* 'K VOPROSU O DREVNIKH LAPIDARNIKH PAMYATNIKAKH S ISTORICHESKIMI NADPISYAMI NA TERRITORYI BYELORUSSKOY S.S.R.' MOSCOW - LENINGRAD, 1946, PP, 549 - 260.

** 'LAVRENTY ANNALS'. ST. PETERSBURG. 1872. P.358. FOR 1176.

*** 'THE TOWNS OF ANCIENT RUS' BY M.TIKHOMIROV. MOSCOW.1959. P.386.

† 'A HISTORY OF THE SMOLENSK LAND UNTIL THE EARLY 15-TH CENTURY'. BY P.V GOLUBOVSKY. KIEV. 1895. PP. 214-15, 257.

in contrast to the prince and his men-at-arms.]

But the most curious fact is probably the report in official Smolensk documents describing the LYUDI taking part in political affairs side by side with the prince. In the above-mentioned charter deed we find the following concluding words "And let no one judge this after my death, neither the prince, nor the LYUDI." This connection of the LYUDI, i.e., the townsfolk, with the installation of a bishopric in Smolensk becomes clear if we recall that the town's weights and measures were kept at the bishopric. As was the practice elsewhere, the Cathedral of the Assumption in Smolensk served as a repository for the standard weights and measures.

The well-known Smolensk treaty of 1229 is another document which bears traces of having been drawn up with the participation of the townsfolk. Golubovsky notes that it, too, was drawn up after the prince consulted the vyecha. Some of its transcripts confirm this with the following words: "That it may be so for ever, and be acceptable to the prince and to all the people of Smolensk." At the signing of the treaty, the Smolensk side was represented by one Tumash Smolnyanin, called TUMASH MIKHALEVICH in some transcripts. Among Smolensk envoys sent to Riga were the priest Yeremei and the SOTSKY Pantelei, called "a wise MUZH" in some transcripts. The SOTSKIYE, it will be recalled, were connected with the urban craftsmen and merchants.

"The vyecha—according to Golubowski—had legislative powers which it shared with the prince, and without the vyecha it was impossible to establish the size of the tributes, to grant land, or any other privileges in general." *

The vyecha was summoned by the ringing of a bell.

EARLY ASSOCIATIONS

From the tenth to the twelfth century inclusive, all Byelorussian principalities were largely made up of feder-

* 'A HISTORY OF THE SMOLENSK LAND UNTIL THE EARLY 15-TH CENTURY', BY P.V.GOLUBOVSKY. KIEV, 1895, PP. 215.

ated «republics», whose citizens, in the form of trade guilds, maintained commercial relations with the territories of the far east, west and north.

It is very difficult to discover traces of various associations in all towns, but we are in possession of a hint at a merchant guild in Polotsk where a BRATSHCHINA used to be held at the Church of the Mother of God.

A BRATSHCHINA in Polotsk is mentioned in the report for 1159 with details that allow us to draw some conclusions about the nature of that association. Prince Rostislav of Polotsk was invited by the citizens of Polotsk to attend «a BRATSHCHINA at the Church of the Mother of God on St.Peter's Day.» Having been forewarned that a plot was being engineered against him, Rostislav went to the BRATSHCHINA wearing a coat of mail under his surcoat, and thus foiled the attempt.

This story reveals that the BRATSHCHINA in Polotsk was held at the church of a patron saint–the Mother of God in this case–very possibly at the old town cathedral. St. Peter's Day (June 29), one of the great church feasts, was chosen as the occasion. It becomes evident from the message of the Polotsk citizens to the prince and his reply the following day that the BRATSHCHINA was no common banquet. «Prince, come to us, we have something to tell you...» And Rostislav replied to the envoys: «I visited you yesterday. Why did you not tell me what you had to?»* This is an indication that the BRATSHCHINA was attended by prominent Polotsk citizens with whom the prince could negotiate.

Nothing is known of the existence of merchant associations in other towns. But the absence of reports to that effect does not mean anything at all, because the lack of chronicle reports about urban life in the 12th-13th centuries is a matter of common knowledge.

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* 'IPATY ANNALS'. P. 340.

THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA
OR
THE LITHUANO–BYELORUSSIAN STATE

The Byelorussian principalities, having two strong and ruthless neighbours – the Muscovite Principality to the east and the no less aggressive Teutonic Order of Knights to the west, began to unite, not only among themselves but also with the Principality of Zhmudz (the present Lithuania) which was threatened by the Livonian Order of Sword-Bearers. At the time of the Mongol invasion of Muscovy (sometimes called the Tartar invasion), i.e. at the beginning of the thirteenth century, there was formed in the west a new country known later as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In history such a federation of three nations was unusual. The territory of these three peoples, Lithuanians, Byelorussians and Ukrainians, extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea and covered an area of approximately 350,000 square miles.

The Lithuanians proper (Zhmudzians), a non-Slav people, lived in the northern part of Grand Duchy of Lithuania and spoke a language quite distinct from Byelorussian or Ukrainian. Philologists state that the Lithuanian language is the oldest surviving Indo-European language and closely resembles ancient Sanskrit.

The Byelorussian element * in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was about ten times more numerous than the Lithuanians proper. This factor and more highly developed Byelorussian culture led to the Lithuanian princes

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* THE BYELORUSSIANS ARE CONSIDERED TO BE THE PUREST OF THE THREE GREAT SLAV DIVISIONS: MUSCOVITES(GREAT RUSSIANS). UKRAINIANS(LITTLE RUSSIANS) AND BYELORUSSIANS(WHITE RUSSIANS). SEE 'L'EMPIRE DES TSARS ET LES RUSSES', BY LEROY BEAULIEN, PARIS, 1898.

and their nobility being entirely assimilated, some even accepting the Greek-Orthodox faith, the official Byelorussian religion. It is worth while to note that the majority of Lithuanians proper (Zhmudzians) were pagan up to the end of the fourteenth century and the first mass baptism was in 1386, i.e. 400 years later than the Byelorussians. *

Prince Ringhold, who according to the «Voskresenskaya Chronicle», was a descendant of the princes of Polotsk, but for some time had lived in Zhmudz. Later, he ruled in Novogrodok, which was part of the Polotsk Principality, and united some neighbouring territories. He died in 1239 but the idea of the union was furthered even more vigorously by his son Mindovg (Mindaugas) [1239–1263], who was able to unite around the city of Novogrodok the following Byelorussian principalities: Volkovysk, Zdzitov, Slonim, Grodno, Horodok, Vilna, Brest, and Melnik, as well as part of Vitebsk and Smolensk Lands.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that Mindaugas obtained the Grand-Ducal dignity and became the founder of the Rus-Lithuanian State only by virtue of friendly relationship of his father Ringold with the neighbouring Byelorussian princes.

[Recall in «The Story of the Expedition of Prince Igor» the poetic portrait of Izyaslav Vasilyevich «who alone drummed his sword on the Lithuanian helmets and was later killed on the blood-soaked grass by Lithuanian swords.» The account ends with the words: «Gorodno's trumpets blare.» ** Students of «The Story of the Expedition of Prince Igor» will now scarcely doubt that Izyaslav was connected with Gorodno or Horadzen-Grodno.]

No doubt that at the beginning there was a great deal of violence and compulsion. The period of early conquests

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* 'IN A PAPAL DOCUMENT OF 1244 WE FIND MENTION OF CHRISTIANS IN "LETTOUIA", WHICH MAY INDICATE THAT SOME LITHUANIANS HAD ACCEPTED THE FAITH' (AUTHOR QUOTES AFTER "PREUSSISCHE URKUNDENBUCH", VOL. I, FT.1, P.118. NO. 157 SEE "A HISTORY OF THE EXPANSION OF CHRISTIANITY" BY KENNETH SCOTT LATOURETTE, II, LONDON 1939, P.206.)

** 'THE TOWNS OF ANCIENT RUS' BY M.TIKHOMIROV, MOSCOW. 1959.P.396.

of the Byelorussian lands around Grodno, Novogrudok and Slonim by Lithuanians is reflected in the appearance of the new name of «Black Rus» or Black Russia (Lat. Russia Nigra), subsequently applied to that territory. Only the following years brought a friendly co-operation of the two nations by the establishment of family alliances between the rulers.

From the 13th century onwards the word «black» was formerly applied also to the territory of Moscovian Rus which was under the Tartars.

[In the Byelorussian language as in many other languages the word «black» means not only the colour, but also alludes to something utterly dismal or glum, dirty, foul, wicked; obtained by violence, not free, enslaved or conquered. The word «white», on the other hand, means: innocent, pure, without evil intentions and most of all free. Here we may find an explanation of the origin of the names: Russia Nigra, or Black Russia and synonymous terms Russia Alba, White Russia, Byelaya Rus, Byelarus which in the modern terminology became russified form in English - Byelorussia.]

To gain influence over the Turov-Pinsk Principality, and Volhynia, Mindovg married his daughter to the ruling prince of those territories,Shvarno.

In 1252 the Grand Duke Mindaugas was converted to Christianity with all the grandees of his realm. «This fact is often passed over in silence although it has an important bearing upon the conversion of the entire Lithuanian people some hundred years later.» *

«Mindaugas was a pagan, but in order to maintain his hold over the western areas, he was baptized, and by sending his own envoys to Rome succeeded in being crowned king in 1253 with the approval of Pope Innocent IV.» **

From a manuscript of the year 1251 we hear that King Mindowe (also known as Mendowg) of Lithuania had be-

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* "LITHUANIA PAST AND PRESENT" BY E J.HARRISON, LONDON, 1922. P.41.

** "COMMUNIST TAKEOVER AND OCCUPATION OF BYELORUSSIA". UNION CALENDER NO. 929, 83-RD CONGRESS SPECIAL REPORT NO. 9, WASHINGTON, 1955, P. 3. SEE ALSO "POLAND" BY W.R.MORFILL, LONDON, 1893. P. 15.

come a Christian and had sent an embassy to Rome. The Pope received him under his protection and claimed all of his territory as the property of the Holy See.

According to a letter from Pope John XXII, June 1, 1324, to King Gedimin: "Mindowe had abjured Christianity because of the atrocities and the injuries which he had received at the hands of the Teutonic Knights." *

Zhmudz was dissatisfied with the new Byelorussian ruler, and there was an uprising in the course of which Mindovg was killed in a battle in 1263. He was succeeded by the Polotsian Prince Tawtsvil, who was also killed in battle with Zhmudzians. His place was taken by the oldest son of Mindovg, Voyshelak, who eventually suppressed the rebelious Zhmudz, and created the strong foundation for the Byelorussian-Lithuanian Union.

After the death of Voyshelak (1269) there were struggles among the princes but in 1271 the whole of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was again ruled by one prince, Troyden (1271 - 1282), then followed Lutaver (1282 - 1295), Viten (1295 - 1316), and eventually most famous of them all, Gedimin (1316 - 1341).

Prince Gedimin was a very able and just ruler, diplomat and politician. He did all he could to strengthen the Grand Duchy and to unite further some Byelorussian territories which, due to very frequent changes of weak rulers, were only loosely united with Lithuania.

He transfered his capital from Novogrodok to Vilna, situated on the border between Zhmudz and Byelorussia, and more important from the strategic, political and commercial point of view. The majority of the inhabitants of Vilna and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a whole at that period were Byelorussians. An English historian W. E.D.Allen estimates that two-thirds of the population of the Grand Duchy were Byelorussians. ** Byelorussian historians estimate the proportion as four-fifths.

Prince Gedimin invited to Vilna from abroad a num-

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* "A HISTORY OF THE EXPANSION OF CHRISTIANITY" BY KENNETH SCOTT LATOURETTE, VOL. II, LONDON 1939, P. 206-207.

** "THE UKRAINE, A HISTORY" BY W.E.D.ALLEN. CAMBRIDGE. 1940, P.41-42.

ber of craftsmen, artisans, architects and scholars; and during his rule there was quite considerable cultural and economical development. He built two castles: one in Vilna, and another one not to far from the capital, at Troki. By surrounding Vilna with a wall of stones he made it into a fortress. Because there were frequent attacks from the east and south by the Mongolians, and from the west by the Teutonic Order of Knights, Gedimin was forced to concentrate his energy in defending his borders. In one of the battle with the Teutons he was killed (1341).

Before his death, however, he divided his heritage between his seven sons, two of them, Olghird and Keystutis, succeeded in subduing the others to their authority and agreed (1345) to govern the country jointly. Olghird, the elder, took over the eastern part of the Grand Duchy, residing sometimes at Vilna and sometimes at the castle of Medniki. His court was of Belorussian character and the language spoken was Byelorussian.

Keystutis ruled Lithuania proper and it was he who in the 14th cent. signed a commercial treaty with England. In marked contrast to his brother's court, here the Lithuanian language was alone spoken. *

Prince Olghird successfully fought the Tartar's Golden Hord, and liberated part of the Ukraine, namely the principalities of Volhynia, Kiev and Podolia, which were included in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In the east he annexed the territories of Chernigov and Novgorod-Seversk. At the same time he tried to fortify his position and influence in the Principality of Smolensk, because he was afraid of the aggressive Muscovite center. At that time Muscovy was becoming more and more intent on territorial expansion and was conquering weaker neighboring princes and taking their lands. That was the cause of the wars between Olghird and Prince Dimitr Ivanovich, the ruler of Muscovy, which lasted for four years (1368–1372).

Olghird was the more able as a military leader and twice surrounded Moscow. In one of the chronicles of the

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* "LITHUANIA PAST AND PRESENT" BY E.J.HARRISON, LONDON, 1922, P.16.

Grand Duchy of Lithuania there is the following account:

"Prince Dimitr not being able to defend his principality, sent to Prince Olghird a humble request not to expel him (Dimitr) from his fatherland and Moscow, and promised rich gifts; he agreed to give Olghird anything he liked, requesting him not to be angry with him and to have pity on him. Olghird was sorry for Dimitr, and showed his good will by not expelling him from Moscow and by making peace with him. After that treaty Prince Dimitr left Moscow and came to see Prince Olghird bringing him many valuable gifts: gold, silver, pearls, jewels and skins from fur-bearing animals to repay him for his losses in connection with the war."

Olghird accepted those gifts but said: "We made peace but it would be not fair for me to leave things as they are without other signs of glory and fame for the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Rus, and Zhmudz. And therefore I want to touch the walls of Moscow with my spear."

He mounted his horse, took his spear in his hand, rode to the wall of Moscow, touched it with his spear, and said in a loud voice: "Remember, Grand Duke of Muscovy, that a Lithuanian spear has touched Moscow's wall." Then he (Olghird) with full honours left Moscow at the head of his army, taking with him many prisoners and costly booty. He made a new frontier between Muscovy and Lithuania, going through Mozhaysk and Kolomna, and annexing some territories and towns to Lithuania. *

In the first half of the 13th century the division of the three eastern groups of Slavs: Byelorussians, Ukrainians and Muscvites became a fact. Each of these nations started to live an independent life as a nation, and the assertion of the Russian historians that Byelorussian and Ukrainian Slavs wanted all the time to unite with their "older brothers" (meaning Russians) is a false one. On the contrary, Byelorussians and Ukrainians for more than three centuries struggled and fought against the aggressive Muscovite rulers to defend their national and political independence.

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* "BYELORUSSIA YESTERDAY AND TODAY" BY J.NAYDZYUK. MINSK, 1944.P 42.

THE RELIGIOUS STRUGGLE IN THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA

The rulers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were endeavouring to establish in their country an independent Orthodox Metropolitan See, and this was achieved during the reign of Lutaver In 1291 the Patriarch of Constantinople appointed bishop Theophil as a Metropolitan of Novogrodok (in Byelorussia) for all Rus.

Before the conquest and destruction of Kiev by the Tartars the Metropolitan See for all Rus was in Kiev, and later on was transfered to Novogrodek. This move was sanctioned by the Bizantine Emperor Andronicos the Elder, who admitted the See of Novogrodok to the Council of Patriarchs granting it 82nd place out of 100. *

The Muscovite princes were trying all the time to subordinate to themselves the Metropolitan See of Kiev and all Rus, and thus the Orthodox Church of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It was one of the reasons for the struggle on religious grounds between Muscovy and Lithuania. The authorities of the Church of Constantinople preferred to see one united East-Slavonic Metropolitan See, the Lithuanian princes insisted on division. The Grand Duke Olghird sent to Constantinople the Metropolitan of Novogrodok, Roman (who was the brother of his wife, Mary Yaroslavna, Princess of Polotsk) as his candidate to the Metropolitan See of all Rus, Kiev, Galicya and at the same time of Muscovy.

But the Muscovite Prince sent his own candidate, Bishop Alex, to Constantinople with a similar request. The Patriarch of Constantinople, receiving many gifts from both sides, approved and appointed both candidates as Metropolitans of all Rus, Kiev, Galicya and Muscovy. This decision only embittered the struggle and eventually caus-

* "Z HISTORYI PRAVASLAUNAJ CARKVY BIELARUSKAHA NARODU" BY J. KOSIAK, NEW YORK, 1956, P. 8. SEE ALSO "COMMUNIST TAKEOVER AND OCCUPATION OF BYELORUSSIA". UNION CALENDAR NO. 929, 83-RD CONGRESS, SPECIAL REPORT NO. 9, WASHINGTON, 1955, P. 4.

ed the division of the Metropolitan See into two separate and independent ones. Thus, as it was before, to the Metropolitan Roman were subordinated the bishoprics of Polotsk, Novogrodok, Turov, Bryansk and Volhynia. But the struggle for power lasted for about two centuries, and the Byelorussian Metropolitans were still independent and had nothing to do with the Muscovite Church authorities.

When the eyes of the Polish rulers turned in the direction of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as an object of the political and religious expansion, the Grand Duchy at that time was a free and independent state, one of the largest and most powerful states of medieval Europe. The «brain» of the Polish ruling class—Roman Catholic clergy knew perfectly well, that an attempt of military conquest of the Grand Duchy would be disastrous to Poland, so they had to find other means than that of military adventure. They persuaded their young Queen Hedwig (Yadwiga) to break her engagement to William of Austria, and to marry the Grand Duke of Lithuania Yagailo (Yagello).* The Polish Roman Catholic clergy convinced the Queen that, by this act, she will accomplish Christian work through «introduction» of Christianity into pagan Lithuania. The Polish priests cunningly exploited the fact that the young Queen was ignorant of the presence of Christianity in the Grand Duchy for the past four hundred years.

After the death of Olghird (Algirdas) in 1377, his son Yagailo tried to make himself sole master of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania with the help of the German Teutonic Order. In 1382 he took Keystutis captive, and also his eldest son Vitovt, both of whom were imprisoned in Krevo castle. Several days later Keystutis was found strangled.

Vitovt escaped and with the help also of the Teutonic Order proceeded to challange Yagailo's hegemony.

Yagailo, on marrying the Polish Queen Hedwig, became at the same time the King of Poland. In 1386 there

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* "POLAND" BY W.R.MORFILL. M.A., LONDON, 1893. P.49.

was concluded a union between Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, creating one political organization for two independent countries. It was called the Union of Krevo, after the town in which it was concluded. It was a personal union by which two independent states agreed to have one ruler. This policy of Yagailo created discontent among the Byelorussian and Zhmudzian boyars and townsfolk. An uprising was organized and the union with Poland was dissolved. A new Grand Duke for Lithuania was appointed; he was Grand Prince Vitovt. In this way the validity of the Krevo union was anulled.

Vitovt (1392–1430) was the pupil of Hanno Windenheim and was highly educated for those days, speaking both German and Latin.

In 1399 Hedwig, the Queen in her own right, died without issue; her daughter having lived only a few days.

After Anne of Cilli, who left Yagailo only a daughter and after a third childless marriage with a Polish lady, the old king (Yagailo) had married, at Vitovt's suggestion, a Byelorussian princess from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Sophia Holshanskaya.

The same year 1424 a son Ladislaus was born. Second son died, but in 1427 another son, Casimir, was born.

The Poles themselves thought that these sons, given to the King by Sophia Holshanskaya, being of entirely foreign origin without any blood of the old national dynasty in them, had no hereditary rights. *

The religious struggle between Lithuania and Muscovy continued, and the Church Authorities at Constantinople tried to unite both of them into one Metropolitan See. There was a time when the Lithuanians were considering breaking from Constantinople, when the Church authorities refused to appoint a separate Metropolitan for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Byelorussian Orthodox clergy were wholeheartedly supported by Prince Vitovt, who on the 15th of November 1416 convoked all the Orthodox archbishops, bishops, and other clergy as well as the Byelorussian princes and boyars to elect, in

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* SEE "THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF POLAND", CAMBRIDGE, 1950, P. 224.

accordance with the apostolic rules, the new Metropolitan of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, contrary to the request of the Patriarch of Constantinople. During that convocation Bishop Gregory Tsamblak, a Serbian by birth, was elected as the Metropolitan of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. *

At the same time there was an increasing conflict with the Polish Roman Catholic clergy , who, after baptizing the Zhmudzians by Yagailo into that faith, began to arrive in Lithuania in great numbers. They were trying not only to convert the people to their faith but also were carrying out the policy of polonization. They had the full support of the ruling Polish authorities, whose aim was eventually to annex the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to Poland. The Byelorussian princes and boyars opposed this, but it was not an easy struggle. The Poles were working it systematically, preoccupied with that aim, whereas the attention of the Byelorussians was concentrated in the first place on the external enemies–the Muscovites and the Teutonic Order who threatened Lithuania. These political aspects forced Vitovt to new agreements with the Poles, signed at Vilna and Radom in 1401.

One of the results of these agreements was the vigorous attack of the combined forces, consisting in prevailing majority of Byelorussians, against their old enemies, the Teutonic Knights, whom they defeated at the great battle of Gruenwald, near Tannenberg in Prussia, in 1410, in which Ulrich von Jungingen, the Grand Master, was killed. **

The victory over the Teutonic Knights at Gruenwald did not remove the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the threat of the Muscovites, and Vitovt was forced to an agreement with the Poles at Horodlo (1413), by which the Lithuanians agreed not to elect, after Vitovt's death, a

* "POLAND" BY W.R.MORFILL, M.A., LONDON, 1893, PP. 53-54, AND SEE ALSO "Z HISTORYI PRAVASLAUNAJ CARKVY BIELARUSKAHA NARODU" BY J.KOSIAK, NEW YORK, 1956, P.11.

** "HISTORYJA BIELARUSKAJ KNIHI" (HISTORY OF THE BYELORUSSIAN BOOK) BY V.LASTOUSKI, KAUNAS, 1926, PP. 144-145.

new Grand Duke of Lithuania without Polish consent, and the Poles at the same time agreed not to elect kings without consent of the Lithuanians.

There were some difficulties and complications inside the Grand Duchy of Lithuania because the Zhmudzian boyars, being Roman Catholic and influenced by the Polish Catholic clergy, quite often took the Polish side against the Byelorussian Orthodox boyars. Realising the danger of this Vitovt wanted to give the Byelorussian noblemen the same rights as those of the boyars, but to do so he had to be crowned as king of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. An agreement was reached with the Pope and the coronation was to be held in 1429 at Lutsk, but was postponed to the next year because the crown on its way from Rome was stolen by the Poles. Unfortunately Vitovt died in 1430.

The Political Struggle between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland

The incident with Vitovt's crown caused a lot of discontent and anger amongst Lithuanians against the Poles. After Vitovt's death, in spite of the agreement of Horodlo, a Prince of Bryansk and Novgorod-Seversk, Svidrigailo (Svidrigello) was elected Grand Duke of Lithuania (1430-1432) without the Poles being consulted. He was a follower of the policy of complete independence for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

The King Yagailo approved as Vitovt's successor Svidrigailo, who was the only surviving brother of the King, and was supported by a majority of the princes and boyars of the Grand Duchy. He was a Roman Catholic, but always strongly objected to polonization of his country. That is why in his fight against the Poles, Svidrigailo also had partisans among the Catholics of the Lithuania proper.

"These circumstances strengthened his position when, scarcely entrusted with power, he entered into a conflict with the Poles. The dispute had two causes. First, disre-

garding the stipulations of the Horodlo Union, Yagailo had made him Grand Duke without consulting the Poles, and Svidrigailo himself, continuing Vitovt's policy after the unfortunate Lutsk congress, was not inclined to recognize Poland's supremacy as laid down in 1401 and 1413... The Poles, therefore, decided to remove him from grand-ducal dignity and encouraged a plot... The «coup d'etat» of 1st September 1432 succeeded only in part: Svidrigailo escaped...» *

The Poles did not manage to have Svidrigailo murdered. With the help of the population of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania he continued fighting the Poles until his death in 1452.

After Svidrigailo. Sigismund I, the son of Keystutis, was elected Grand Duke of Lithuania (1432-1434). He was under Polish influence and even transfered to them a large province of Podolia without the consent of the Lithuanian nobility. After a short rule he was murdered.

After Sigismund's assassination the Lithuanians asked the Polish King Ladislaus (Yagailo),who at the same time was Duke of Lithuania, to send to Lithuania his successor Prince Casimir. But when Casimir arrived at Vilna, he was immediately elected as Grand Duke of Lithuania (1440-1492), again without consulting the Poles. (Later, after the death of Ladislaus, the Poles elected Casimir their king.) The Lithuanians approved their choice on condition that the union or rather federation with Poland would have only one aim: common defence, and that the provinces Volhynia and Podolia would permanently belong to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

The conditions were accepted and King Casimir granted the Lithuanian princes, boyars, noblemen and townsmen special privileges («Zyemskiya pryvilei»), guaranteeing them full personal freedom. In 1468 Casimir granted the Grand Duchy of Lithuania an important law called «Statute» or «Sudziebnik of King Casimir». It is worth while to remember that all laws and documents of the

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* "THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF POLAND". - PROBLEMS OF THE NEW MONARCHY. CAMBRIDGE, 1950, P. 228.

Grand Duke of Lithuania were written in Byelorussian. *

Casimir was a just and wise ruler but towards the end of his reign he wanted to subordinate the Byelorussian Orthodox Church to the Pope, thus causing dissatisfaction, some anxiety and even disturbances. The plan was eventually abandoned.

After Casimir's death, his son Alexander was elected as Grand Duke (1492-1506) by the Lithuano-Byelorussian nobility, and again without consulting the Poles. In spite of that, the Poles invited the Lithuano-Byelorussian princes and boyars to take part in the Seym (some form of Parliament) for the election of a king. Lithuano-Byelorussian representatives refused to take part in that election, and the Poles themselves elected John Albert (brother of the Grand Duke Alexander) as their king.

Duke Alexander sent his brother congratulations and best wishes not as a subordinate but as a man on equal terms, as a representative of an independent country. From the previous union there was left practically nothing except good relationship between two neighbours, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland.

This did not last very long. Muscovy, supported by Tartars, made war on the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which was forced to request help from the Poles. They agreed to do so on condition that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania would honour all previous treaties, especially those of 1413-1432 concerning union with Poland. Such an agreement concerning the union binding both countries was again signed, and this time the union was to last longer and to bring both partners closer together.

Grand Duke Alexander had married Princess Helen, a daughter of Ivan III., of Muscovy. She used her influence to effect a reconciliation between her father and husband, and a truce for six years was signed from March 25, 1503, to March 25, 1509.

When Prince Alexander died (he had been elected by the Poles as their king after the death of John Albert), the Byelorussian and Zhmudzian princes, nobles and bo-

* "POLAND" BY W.R.MORFILL, M.A., LONDON, 1893. P. 14.

yaıs again refused to participate in the Polish Seym for electing a new king, and instead, at their own Seym, elected Sigismund II (brother of Alexander) as their Grand Duke (1506-1529). The Poles, in order not to break with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, also elected him as Polish king (1506-1548).

Muscovy at this period was quite strong and tried to extend the territories not only to the east but also to the west, at the expense of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The war between Muscovy and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania lasted, with short intervals, for 37 years (1501-1537) without any decisive results and with changing fortunes, although the troops of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania won a number of important battles: at Orsha in 1514, at Opochka in 1517 and in 1527 against the Tartars.

The full burden of the war was carried by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania alone without the promised help from Poland. Therefore the representatives of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania decided the last agreement with the Poles no longer binding. To emphasize this, they ignored the Poles, and elected in 1522 Sigismund August (son of King Sigismund II) as their temporary grand duke, in case of Sigismund's II death. In 1529 (before Sigismund's II death) they made Sigismund III August their Grand Duke with full rights, arranging big ceremonial festivities and celebrations.

To avoid breaking with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Sigismund III August was hurriedly elected by the Poles also as their king, and thus there came about quite a unique event in history – Poland had at the same time two elected reigning kings (1529 – 1548): father (Sigismund II–Old), and Sigismund III August – his son.

After careful study of the matter it appeares clear that the proverbial expression that Poland was «ante-murale Christianitatis» does not make much sense because all the weight of danger, from the east, had fallen always upon the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. There is no doubt that the latter with its strong Orthodoxy was a real wall of Christianity sheltering this very same Poland and the rest of Western Europe.

Sigismund III August was the last Grand Duke, elected by the Byelorussian and Zhmudzian (Lithuanian proper) nobility, freely and without consultation with Poland.

Because of the growing threat from Muscovy, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania did not feel strong enough to oppose its enemies so she had to seek some sort of formal agreement with Poland, in order to assure her co-operation in the defence of the country. For this reason union with Poland was concluded at the Diet of Lublin in 1569.

Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, whose relationship up to that time had not been very close, because of the differences of language and religion, it became one federal kingdom with one king and one parliament, but the Lithuano-Byelorussian State retained a seperate administration, separate army, budget and law. The records and minutes of the joint session of the Lublin Diet were written in Byelorussian.



GOLD PIECE OF TEN FLORINS OF THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA (1562). *

For about another fifty years the ruling classes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were still trying to secure some form of independence in international relations, as is proved by the following document:

* "POLAND" BY W.R.MORFILL, M.A., LONDON, 1893, P. 81.

THE RUSSIAN TREATY PROPOSALS, 1617.

(Record Office, S.P. 91/2, ff. 40-1) *

" (f. 40 r.) The written propositiones upon which the greate Lord Emperor & greate Duke Michaell Feodorowich of all Russia, selfe upholder, desyres to be in an everlasting League with his deere brother the greate Lord James of England Scotland France and Ireland, etc.

1. Whosoever shalbe freind to the greate Lord Emperor and greate Duke Michaell Feodorowich of all Russia, selfe upholder, his Emperiall Majesty, the same shalbe freind to his brother the greate Lord James, his Kingly Majestie of greate Bryttanie.

. . . .

12. And yf that the greate Lord King James etc. cannot at this tyme upon his part for some resonable cawses send his people against Sigismundis King of Poland, by land nor by Sea, for the remotnes of the place, then the greate Lord James etc. shall assist his Brother the greate Lord Emperor etc., against the sayd his enemies Sigismundis King of Poland and his Sonnes, and against the Crowne of Poland, and **the greate Dukedome of Letto** (Old English name for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or Lithuano-Byelorussian State. R.O.) with Treasure and all manner of warlike munytione as much as he is (f. 40 v.) trewly able, and shall forbyd his Subjectes Soldiers of England and Scotland and other Domyniones, to serve the sayd enemies Sigismundis King of Poland and his Sonne Vladislaus and the Crowne of Poland and greate Duke of **Letto**, nether shall suffer any other Straingers Soldiers nor cause them to be suffered to pass through any his Domyniones, against the sayd greate Lord Emperor, . . ."

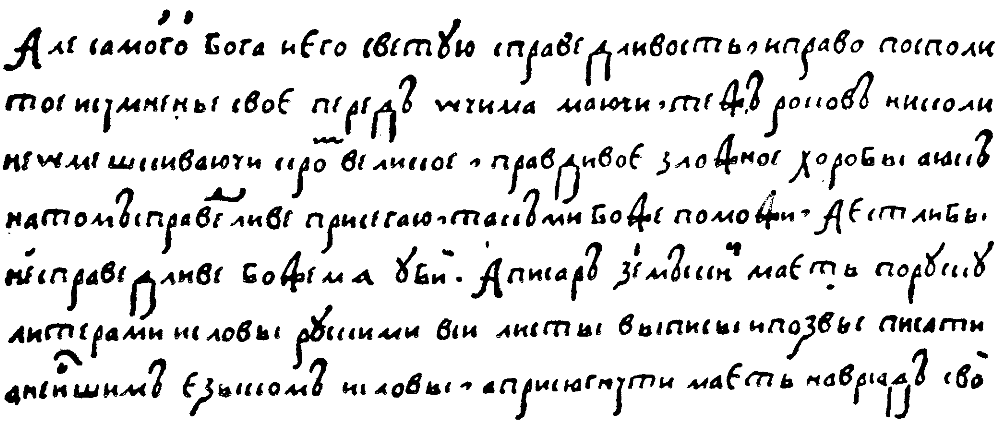
—o—

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was still struggling for its independence as was partly reflected in the third edition of famous "Statute" in 1588 (edited by Prince Leo

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* "OXFORD SLAVONIC PAPERS", VOLUME I, EDITED BY S KONOVALOV, LONDON, 1950, PP. 95-96.

Sapyeha, chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania), consisting of constitutional, civil, criminal and administrative laws. It is of interest, that such an important act as the Union of Lublin was not mentioned at all. Some other laws, which were imposed on the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by the Polish kings, were omitted too. Those omissions could mean that they regarded these laws to be invalid. The Statutes were written in Byelorussian.


Але самого Бога и его светую справедливость и право посполи
тое и змены своє перед очима маючи, тых роков никоторых ни коли
не отмешкиваючи, кромъ великое и правдивое злоднои хоробы аюшъ
натомъ справедливе присягаю, такъ ми Боже помози. А естли бы
несправедливе, Боже мя убий. А писар земский маеть по руску
литерами и словы рускими вси листы выписы и позвы писати
а не иншим езыком и словы, а присягнути маеть на вряд сво

PART OF THE PAGE FROM THE STATUTE FOR THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA (PHOTOCOPY OF THE PRINTED EDITION 1588.) *

[...“But having in mind God, His Holy justice and common law, court trials already appointed, I will never postpone, except in case of serious illness. I sincerely swear by this, and God help me, if I should break my oath, however, may God strike me dead. The official letters, copies and court notices must be written in Rus letters and words of Rus, and not in any other language; and the clerk has to be sworn into his office.” (The term ‘Rus’ refers to the Middle Byelorussian language and not to the Great Russian. R.O.)]

The first Statute or Code of laws for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was published in 1529 during the reign of Sigismund III, while the first Book of Laws, partly based on the Statutes, was published in Moscow as late as 1550.

* "BYELORUSY" BY PROF. E.F.KARSKI. V.I. MOSCOW, 1955. P. 85.

The above, constituting a very short outline of the historical happenings and facts, shows that up to the second half of the sixteenth century the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, even after Yagailo's marriage to the Polish Queen Hedwig, was an independent country very loosely united with Poland. (Yagailo spoke only Byelorussian and up to the end of his life never learned Polish, although he was the Polish King.) The majority of the princes did not recognize the previous unions, but the Union of Lublin had more serious consequences. *

The people of the Byelorussian principalities were converted to the Orthodox faith in the tenth century, but there had never been any pressure brought to bear on non-Byelorussians to accept the same religion, and therefore it is not surprising that during the Byelorussian influence in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania the Zhmudzians were pagans up to the fourteenth century. Other religions, too enjoyed full freedom, Moslems, Jews, and later Protestants, Calvinists, and Roman Catholics. Even Tartars living in Byelorussia, although their number was very small, were able to publish their prayer-book «Al-Kitab» in Byelorussian, using Arabic letters. **

[There were in Byelorussia some Tartar Moslems; they were incomers - mostly descendant of emigrants and former prisoners of war. They forgot their native tongue but preserved their religion and Arabic alphabet.]

The Byelorussians did not interfere with the coming of the Polish Roman Catholic clergy and their vigorous activity, even when Grand Duke Vitovt renounced his Orthodox religion and was himself converted to Roman Catholicism. That conversion had an enormous influence on the Byelorussian princes and nobility, who, to retain their positions and privileges or to gain even greater ones and some fiscal concessions enjoyed by the Polish nobility— so called «shlakhta», began to adopt Catholicism and later on were polonized.

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* "POLAND" BY W.R.MORFILL. M.A., LONDON, 1893. P. 58.

**"A READER IN THE HISTORY OF THE EASTERN SLAVIC LANGUAGES" BY COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS, NEW YORK, 1958, P.43.

The Religious Union of Brest (1596)

The Polish King Stephen Batory encouraged letters by the foundation of the University of Vilna, the care of which was committed to the Jesuits, who after 1569 were swarming into The Grand Duchy of Lithuania in great numbers, and gradually getting the control of the education of the country. Supported by the patronage of the king the Jesuit colleges and schools spread all over the country, and the University of Vilna, founded by Batory, became their headquarters. It was cunningly established in the centre of a population the great bulk of which was Protestant or Greek Orthodox.

Prince Radzivill, the palatine of Vilna, and Eustathius Vollovich, the Vice-Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, who were Dissidents, for a long time refused to affix the seal of the state to the charter for this Jesuit university, but the king disregarded their representations.*

A wave of polonization was decomposing the unity of the people of the Grand Duchy with growing strength.

However to achieve the final aim – the Byelorussian Orthodoxy had to be destroyed. So on the pattern of the Union of Lublin (political union) – the Church union was on its way.

«Poland sent the most lamentable specimens as pastors to the Grand Duchy. Large numbers of priests were totally devoid of intellectual qualifications, many receiving Holy Orders without having passed through any school. Disorganization and anarchy in ecclesiastical affairs reached such a pitch that according to contemporary evidence even Jews were appointed to hold office as parish priests! Contaminated by this example the Lithuanian nobility presented a melancholy spectacle of deterioration.» **

Some well known Byelorussian noblemen: Radzivill, Sapyeha, Tyshkyevich, Korsak, Chartaryski, Pats and Kishka accepted catholicism in exchange for a few important fiscal concessions and privileges. Such was the background

* "POLAND" BY W.R.MORFILL. M.A., LONDON, 1893. PP. 106-115.

** "LITHUANIA PAST AND PRESENT" BY E.J.HARRISON, LONDON, 1922. P.50.

of the religious union.

Again with the help of artifice and bribery there was signed in Brest in 1596 the religious union of two Churches –Roman Catholic and Orthodox. The supremacy of the Pope was recognized, but nearly all rituals of the Orthodox Church were preserved. This act brought a strong opposition from Orthodox magnates and clergy. Thus a split in the Orthodox Church was created. The leaders of the new sect, called Greek Catholic or Uniat, having support from the ruling class, excommunicated the Orthodox bishops who opposed the union, and the Orthodox Church ceased to exist as a legal Church.

The Roman Catholic and Uniat (Greek Catholic) Churches became State Churches of the Grand Duchy on: Lithuanian, Byelorussian and Ukrainian territories. The Polish Jesuits, who were in large numbers «imported» into Lithuania proper, Byelorussia and Ukraine were set the task of forcing Roman Catholicism and Greek Catholicism onto the people with the ultimate aim of final polonization. Many atrocities were commited in the name of so called «true» religion but not in complete harmony with the spirit and principle of any religion.

«In his Threnody, or the Plant of the Eastern Church, published in 1610, the noted theologian Meletey Smotritski said: 'In Vilna the chief center of the White Russian (Byelorussian) culture and religious life, the churches are taken by force from the Orthodox, soldiers breaking in the doors, taking possession of buildings, and turning them to Uniats.'

The Ukrainian representative, Lavrence Drevinsky, criticized the Polish government in parliament in 1621 for the abuses and oppression of the Ukrainian and White Russian people using the following terms: 'Throughout the length and breadth of the Kingdom, how is the glory of God manifested with the aid of the newly invented Church Union? In the larger cities churches are already closed and the wealth of the Church is dissipated; in the monasteries, cattle are now kept instead of monks' » *

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* "A HISTORY OF UKRAINE" BY M.HRUSHEWSKY, YALE UNIVERSITY, 1941.

Since then a lot of new Roman Catholic and Uniat Churches and monasteries were built, a lot of Orthodox Churches were taken and handed over to the Jesuits and converted into Roman Catholic and Uniat Churches. In the 17th century a number of laws were passed in parliament which were directed against non-Poles, Orthodox and other "dissident" clergy and population. For instance, the Roman Catholics and Uniats were exempted from all taxes, but not the Orthodox (1667); the Catholics were forbidden to change their religion (1668); with the help of the bribed aristocracy of the Grand Duchy in 1696 parliamet passed a law stating that the official language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was to be Polish. Thus Byelorussian started to loose its official status, and the next editions of Lithuanian Statutes were translated and published in Polish. Only Roman Catholics and Uniats could be accepted and hold office (1733).

There were quite frequent uprisings of the persecuted Orthodox people, especially in the 17th century under such leadership as: Vashchyla, Dubina, Halota, Harkush, Khvyeska, Kryvashapka, Stakhar, Mitkovich, Shabelnik and others who often with the co-operation of Ukrainians were fighting for the freedom of their countries. *

A number of the Byelorussian Orthodox nobles remained faithful to their religion and people, although the Poles, mainly the militant clergy, were persecuting them and others of different faiths. Of some interest is a letter of the chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Leo Sapyeha (himself converted to Catholicism), to the Polish Uniat Bishop Joseph Kuncevich of Vitebsk, which says:

"... I have no wish to argue with Your Eminence, but seeing with what obstinacy and disregard for reason you defend your convictions, I am forced to reply to your ill-founded letter...In the Seym, you say, voices now are heard which are harmful not only to the union, but the Roman Church as well. Whose fault is this?...You violated people's consciences, closed their churches so that they should perish without divine service and rite, like

* "ISTORIYA BYELORUSKOY S.S R." BY V.N.PERTSEV. MINSK, 1954, P.141.

the heathen...The King has ordered you to unseal and reopen the churches in Mogilev, of which I advise you hereby according to his order. Should you fail to carry this out, I shall myself, by order of the King, issue orders to have the churches returned to the Orthodox so that they may worship God according to their faith. The Jews and the Tartars are allowed to maintain their synagogues and mosques in the Grand Duchy, and you close down Christian churches!... May the Almighty bless you with the spirit of humility and brotherly love.

Lev Sapyeha, March 12, 1622. " *

Even the letter of a man of such importance could not help. Persecutions went on and on. People were indignant and exasperated by the bishop's terrorist activities. Eventually it caused a revolt; the people killed the bishop, dragged his body through the streets of Vitebsk, and threw it into the river.

There were revolts in some of the towns, Polotsk, Smolensk and others, some of them headed by Orthodox Byelorussian princes, such as Gashtold, Michael Olelkovich of Slutsk, and Theodor Byelski. Those revolts were mercilessly suppressed and a number of the leaders and people taking part in them were executed.

As evidence of the Polish intolerance I would like to quote an extract from the book written by the English historian W.Morfill, M.A. (Reader in Slavonic Languages in the University of Oxford). In his book Prof. Morfill gave the following description of the persecutions:

" The Jesuits were very active during his reign (Sigismund III August R.O.), and many Socinians and other Dissidents met with cruel deaths, The Greek Church suffered much persecution, and the condition of its members is graphically described in the celebrated work, the 'Lament of the Oriental Church,' by Meletius Smotritski, who was also the author of the first Slavonic grammar. The continued persecutions instigated by Koncewicz, the Bishop of Polotsk, led to a deplorable event, the murder

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* QUOTED AFTER "BELORUSSIA THE MAKING OF A NATION" BY N.P.VAKAR, HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, U.S.A. ,1956, P. 59

of that prelate on the 12th July 1623. No revolt against the civil authorities followed on this tumult, but severe punishment was inflicted on the town by a commission presided over by the chancellor, Leo Sapyeha, who had tried in vain to prevent the occurrence by representing to Koncewicz the danger of his proceedings...

Liberty of opinion in religious matters did not make much progress in Poland...

In the reign of John Sobieski (1689), a noble of Lithuania, Casimir Lyszczynski, had been cruelly put to death on a frivolous charge of blasphemy. He was sentenced to have his tongue cut out and then to be beheaded and burnt. This atrocious sentence was carried out in spite of the opposition of the king. Bishop Zaluski, whose letters furnish such valuable materials for the historical student, has recorded the execution with manifest satisfaction...

In 1731 the ambassador from Great Britain at the Polish Court presented a memorial to the king, enumerating various oppressions to which the Protestants were exposed in Poland, and concluding with a threat of retaliation on the Roman Catholics in Engand and the other Protestant States. But all the efforts were fruitless, and even increased the sufferings of the unfortunate Dissidents. But the day of reckoning was at hand. Like the French noblesse, on the eve of the Revolution, the infatuated Polish magnates did not see that they were digging the grave of their country.

In 1733 a law was passed by which the Dissidents were declared incapable of holding any office or enjoying any dignity.

The Dissidents began to betake themselves to Russia for assistance, which she seemed disposed to offer." *

These persecutions gave the princes of Muscovy, as they used to state, some right as defenders of the Orthodox Church to interfere in the internal affairs of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and later on into Polish affairs as well.

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* "POLAND" BY W.R.MORFILL. M.A., LONDON, 1893. PP. 129. 202-204. 215.

Map of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland after the Treaty of Andrusovo (1667)

Grand Duche de Lithuanie et

LA POLOGNE.



J. Ellis Sculp.

FROM "A NEW, GENERAL AND UNIVERSAL ATLAS"
CONTAINING FORTY FIVE MAPS
BY ANDREW DURY
(ENGRAVED BY MT.KITCHIN...)
PRINTED IN 1761, ST MARTIN'S LANE IN DUKE'S COURT, FLEET STREET.

THE EARLY CIVILIZATION AND LANGUAGE

The centers of Byelorussian culture from the tenth to the twelfth centuries were towns situated on «the road from the Varangians to the Greeks», the river route from the Gulf of Finland to the Black Sea by way of the Western Dvina and the Dnieper. This commercial waterway led not only to Byzantium but also beyond to the Middle East as far as Baghdad. The most important towns were Polotsk, Vitebsk, Smolensk, Orsha, Mogilev and, in the Ukraine – Kiev. The latter, due to the proximity of Byzantium, assimilated the advanced culture of that Empire and spread it among the Slavonic tribes. After the introduction of Christianity this process was continued by means of the clergy and the monasteries where education was concentrated and many ecclesiastical books were translated.

The Greeks learnt the art of writing from the Jews who in their turn had learnt it from Phoenicians. The Slav alphabet was derived from the Greek alphabet as can be proved by the order of the letters. The Jewish alphabet begins with the letter «a» (alev), then comes «b» (beyhs), «g» (gimul), «d» (dalhev) and so on. The Greek alphabet begins with the letters: «a» (alfa), followed by «b» (beta), «gamma», «delta» etc. The Slavonik alphabet has the same letter order. Naturally, in every alphabet there were some changes when additional letters were included to express sounds unknown in other languages; for language is always changing as some sounds die out and others come into use.

Historians tell us that the civilising mission of the Church in this area began in 863 when the Byzantine

Emperor Michael III at the request of a Moravian prince, Rostislav, sent to Moravia a group of learned men. *

There is a true as well as a false account of the introduction of Christianity into Rus territory. The event dates from the middle of the ninth century. An exaggerated allusion is made to it by Photius, the patriarch of Constantinople, in a letter addressed to the eastern bishops in 866. «The Ruses - he states - conquerors of the neighboring tribes who have had the audacity to attack the Roman empire, have abandoned their superstitions, and become our friends. We have sent them a bishop and a priest; and they show a real zeal for the Christian religion.» †

The principal agents were Methodius and Cyril, two Greek monks, brothers, and natives of Thessalonica, descended from an illustrious senatorian family, men whose labours were abundant, and whose lives were pure. Cyril, the most distinguished, had in early life borne the name of Constantine, and obtained the surname of Philosopher from his progress in learning. Having visited Bulgaria, Moravia, and the adjoining districts on an evangelising mission, they penetrated into the dark regions further north, and translated the Scriptures and Liturgy into the Slavonic language. For this purpose they invented an alphabet, principally formed from the Greek capitals, and gave to each letter the name of a word beginning with it. These characters are usually termed Cyrillian, from one of the inventors; and the alphabet the Serbian or ancient Rus. About the year 880, Pope John VIII. addressed a letter to a Slavonic prince, in which he observes:—«We approve of the letters invented by the philosopher Constantine; and we order that the praises of Christ may be published in that language. It is not contrary to the faith to employ it in the public prayers of the church, and in reading the Holy Scriptures. He who made the three principal tongues, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, made the rest for his own glory.» **

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* "SLAVYANSKIYE YAZYKI" BY N.A.KONDRASHOV. MOSCOW, 1956, P.65.

† "RUSSIA" BY THE REV. THOMAS MILNER, M.A., LONDON, 1856, P.5.

** IBID., P.6.

The first Old Rus manuscripts: translations of the gospel, the psalter, Greek scriptures, liturgies, prayers, and lives of saints started to appear after the conversion to Christianity of the Eastern Slavs. From Bulgaria there began to arrive not only monks but also priests and educated men connected with them who were supported by the princes. These men built monasteries and started to teach selected members of the local communities to read and write and so created something of a local educated class which was very restricted numerically.

By rewriting Old Rus manuscripts these local people gradually introduced some phonetic and grammar changes peculiar to their own language. The social and economic development of feudal Rus after the end of Mongolian conquests caused the decline of the Kievan Rus and the formation of three separate Slav nationalities: Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Moscovian (later called Great Russian), and three distinct languages.

Soon after the introduction of Christianity in Byelorussia, independent church-administrative centres (bishoprics) were formed, in 992 at Polotsk, in 1114 at Turov, and in 1137 at Smolensk.

Princess Pradslava-Eufrosinia of Polotsk, granddaughter of the Prince of Polotsk, Vseslav Charadzey, founded a monastery in that town in which, besides educational aims- there were rewritten and translated a number of books not only for the Polotian Principality but for the neighbouring ones as well. St.Eufrosinia devoted all her life and energy to cultural and religious work, and visited with her sister and brother David, Jerusalem, Constantinople and other cultural centres. *

The second important cultural centre was Smolensk where the same kind of work was carried out by Klim Smolatitch who later (1147 - 1154) was a Metropolitan of Kiev, and at that period was the head of all Byelorussian

* "Z HISTORYI PRAVASLAUNAJ CARKVY BIELARUSKAHA NARODU" BY J.KOSIAK, NEW YORK, 1956, PP. 6-7.

bishoprics also. Princes Rostislav and Roman of Smolensk collected books, opened schools and invited scholars. Prince Rostislav founded at Smolensk an academy for a small number of privileged pupils.

In the chronicles of 1147 Klim Smolatitch is called "a great scholar and philosopher, and there was no equal to him in the Slav world." From his numerous works only one survived to our time: "THE LETTER TO PRESBYTER THOMAS." In this we can see that there was a controversy between them because Smolatitch, in spite of Thomas's advice and reproach, in interpreting holy scriptures quoted Homer, Aristotle and Plato, instead of "the holy fathers of church", and Smolatitch was defending his right to choose the authors and arguments. The style, contents, tone and way of expressing his thoughts show that he was really a great scholar and philosopher. *

Contemporary with Klim Smolatitch was another gifted writer, preacher and orator – Cyril of Turov. From his short biography we know that he was born in 1130 and died in 1182. He was the son of wealthy parents and had a good education at a monastery. As a young boy he was admitted to the monastery and later, at the request of the prince and inhabitants of Turov, was appointed as a bishop of that town. A chronicler describing him says: "he (Cyril) with his education and wisdom shone over Rus as the sun shines over darkness", and that "he wrote quite a lot of books."

His PRECEPTS make reading compulsory not only for the monks but for the craftsmen as well, i.e., those very people who elected him bishop; he also speaks about the calamities coming "from the people, or the prince." Another of his essays mentions certain "doers labouring with hope," as well as a plough, furrows, etc. A set of precepts ascribed to Cyril censures men who fast but "bear malice and enslave the innocent." His discourse of the departure of the soul deals with merciless lords and the suicides of slaves, etc. **

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* "NARYSY PA HISTORYI BIELARUSKAJ LITERATURY. MINSK, 1956, P. 11.

** 'THE TOWNS OF ANCIENT RUS' BY M.TIKHOMIROV, MOSCOW, 1959, P.326.

The most important literary document of that period was "THE STORY OF THE EXPEDITION OF PRINCE IGOR" (Slovo o polku Igorevye). It was written about 1187 in the Old Rus language by an unknown author. It is a masterpiece of early literary work of Ruse's, but not of Russians. Moscow was the centre of a comparatively small principality and even the word "Russia" was at that time unknown.

With great patriotism the author of the "Story" praises the Prince of Polotsk, Vseslav Charadzey, the princes of Sevyersk, and the Grand Duke of Kiev, Svyatoslav. He describes not the Muscovy, but the Polotian, Severenian, and Kievan Rus, the independent principalities, whose princes were waging war against Polovtsy, headed by the Severenian Prince Igor. The battle was lost and few returned. The author started his prose-poem by quoting a legendary song-writer and ballad-singer Bayan, who inspired him to describe that disunity among ruling princes (as existed before this expedition) could be very dangerous and harmful for the people. The author quoted the Byzantine chronicles, Joseph Flavius, and some other contemporary Western writers, and described facts and people in such a vivid and masterly way that the poem has not lost its artistic value up to the present day.

One of the ancient works of the same 12th century was the literary account entitled: "THE TRAVELS OF PRIOR DANIEL TO THE HOLY LAND" by pilgrim Daniel of Chernigov, who in 1115 travelled to Jerusalem and described a number of legends and stories, all with religious backgrounds.

Byelorussian Cultural and Educational Activity in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania

In spite of very unfavourable conditions in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Byelorussian element, as the most cultured and numerous, secured for itself a dominant position. "The official spoken and written language of the Grand Duchy during Yagailonian period was neither Lithuanian nor Polish, but White Ruthenian; the low-

er class only spoke Lithuanian in the northern part of the country." *

Documents, annals, chronicles, codes of law, religious and secular works and so on were written in Byelorussian. It was language of the Courts, and, according to the English historian Prof. W. R. Morfill, Byelorussians "formed the most civilised element of the strange Lithuanian principality." **

To enable the reader to form an idea of the life of Byelorussian nobleman in the sixteenth century, I will quote a very graphical description of the Court of Nicolaus Radzivill at Vilna by the English ambassador to Muscovy, Jerome Horsey. It will be observed that the orthography of Horsey is very capricious:

"When I came to Villna the chief citie in Littuania, I presented myself and letters pattents from the Quen, that declared my titells and what I was, unto the great duke viovode Ragaville [Radzivill], a prince of great excelencie, prowes and power, and religious protestant, gave me great respect and good enterteynment; told me, though I had nothinge to say to him from the Quen of England, yet, he did so much honnor and admire her excelent vertus and graces, he would also hold me in the reputacion of her majesties ambassador; which was som poliacie that his subjects should thincke I was to negociate with him. Toke me with him to his church; heard devine service, sphalms, songs, a sermon and the sacraements ministered according to the reformed churches; whereat his brother cardinal, Ragavill, did murmur. His hightness did invite me to diner, honnored with 50 halberdeers thorow the cittie; placed gonners and his guard of 500 gentilmen to bring me to his pallace; himself accompanied with many yonge noblemen, receaved me upon the tarras; brought me into a very larg room where organes and singing was, a long tabell set with pallentins, lordes and ladies, himself under a cloth of estate. I was placed before him in the middest of the table; trompetts sound and kettell

* "POLAND" BY EDWARD E. LIGOCKI, LONDON, 1943, P. 143.

** "POLAND" BY W.R.MORFILL, M.A., LONDON, 1893, PP. 14 & 49.

droms roared. The first service brought in ghesters and poets discourse merily, lowed instruments and safft plaied very musically; a set of dwarffes men and weomen finely atired came in with sweet harmeny still and mournfull pieps and songs of art; Davids tymbrils and Arons swett soundinge bells, as the termed them. The varietie made the tyme pleasinge and short. His hightnes drancke for the Majesty the angelicall Quen of England her health; illustrated her greatnes and graces. The great princes and ladyes every one their glass of sweet wines plaeged and I did the like for his health. Strainge portraturs, lyons, unicorns, spread-eagels, swans and other made of suger past, som wines and spicats in their bellies to draw at, and succets of all sorts cutt owt of their bellies to tast of; every one with his sylver forcke. To tell of all the order and particuler services, and rarieties wear tedious; well-feasted, honnored, and much made of, I was conducted to my lodginge in manner as I was brought. Had my letters pattents, and a gentilman to conduct me thorow his countrye; with which I toke my leave. Some pastymes with lyons, bulls, and bares, straing to behold, I omytt to recite." *

The best contrast to all splendor and polish found at the Court of Prince Radzivill is offered to the reader by Lord Raby who gives us a picture of the Royal Courts of Swedish [Charles XII.] and Polish [Stanislaus Leszczynski] kings, some one hundred and fifty years later:

"He wears a black crape cravat, but the cape of his coat, buttoned so close about it, that you cannot see whether he has any or no. His shirt and wristbands are commonly very dirty: for he wears no ruffles or gloves, but on horseback. His hands are commonly of the same colour of [sic] his wristbands; so that you can hardly distinguish them. His hair is light brown, very greasy and very short, never combed but with his fingers. He sits upon any chair or stool he finds in the house, without any ceremony to dinner, and begins with a great piece of bread and butter, having stuck his napkin under his

* "POLAND" BY W.R.MORFILL. M.A., LONDON, 1893. PP. 85 & 86.

chin: then drinks with his mouth full out of a great silver, old-fashioned beaker small beer, which is his only liquor. At every meal he drinks about two English bottles full; he then empties his beaker twice. Between every bit of meat he eats a piece of bread and butter, which he spreads with his thumb. He is never more than a quarter of an hour at dinner, eats like a horse, speaks not one word all the while. As soon as he rises, his life guards sit down at the same table to the same victuals. His bedchamber is a very dirty little room with bare walls; no sheets nor canopy to his bed, but the same quilt that lies under him turns up over him, and so covers him.. His writing-table is of slit deal, with only a stick to support it, and instead of a standish a wooden thing with a sand-box of the same...He has a fine gilt Bible by his bedside, the only thing that looks fine in his equipage...But that my letter is too long already, I would give you some account of the Polish Court of King Stanislaus; for being incognito only with a friend and one footman, and impossible to be known, I would take a tour to Leipsic, where I not only saw that king, but he very civilly came and spoke to me and my friend, seeing we were strangers. His Court has much a better air than that of his maker [i.e., Charles XII.], and his mother and wife were there, a couple of well-bred women, well dressed, and both spoke very good French. He is a tall handsome young man, with a great pair of whiskers [moustaches], in the Polish dress, but inclinable to be fat, and a little upon the dirty, as all the Poles are..." *

After our long digression we will now turn again to the cultural and educational activity in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

The main cultural center of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania contained a heterogeneous collection of Byelorussians, Lithuanians proper, Samogitians, Ukrainians, Tartars, Prussians, Germans and Jews. From the sixteenth century onwards Poles were among the permanent inhabitants of the capital, Vilna.

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* "POLAND" BY W.R.MORFILL. M.A., LONDON, 1893. PP. 209 & 210.

The fact that the Grand Duchy was known and was represented as one political unit makes the erroneous impression that we are dealing with one nation. In the Latin chronicles Byelorussia was known as «Russia Alba» or «Ruthenia Alba». The territory of the Grand Duchy less the territory of Lithuania proper however was called «Ruthenia», and included the Byelorussian and part of the Ukrainian lands.

It is no wonder that in most cases a foreigner was absolutely confused and, therefore, every inhabitant of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was for him, a «Lithuanian». Prof. A.Bruekner, in his work «Rutheno – Polish Handwritings of 1510» (Rusko-Polski rękopis roku 1510 «Slavia», VII, I, pp.10-11) says: «... we always speak of Lithuania and the Lithuanians, but instead it should be Byelorussia and the Byelorussians; in 1562 Nicolaus Rey called Byelorussians by the name of Lithuanians and to the Muscovites of the seventeenth century Lithuanian meant the same as Byelorussian.»

Until the end of the nineteenth century the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania generally called themselves Lithuanians. The famous Polish writer Adam Mitskevich, for example, begins his poem «Pan Tadeusz» with the words: «Lithuania, my Fatherland...» Even much later, in the twentieth century, the notorious Polish chauvinist, Marshal Joseph Pilsudski, (according to Prof. Żółtowski) «...was born near Vilna and all his life remained devoted to the land of his birth, proudly maintaining his right to call himself a Lithuanian in the old sense consecrated by secular usage.» *

We can observe a similarity in the British Commonwealth where, even now, everyone who lives in any member country has a right to call himself «British».

When studying this period of the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania one has to remember that all literary works were written in Byelorussian or in Old Church Slavonic. No official documents in the Lithuanian language have come down to us.

* "BORDER OF EUROPE" BY PROF. ADAM ZOLTOWSKI. LONDON, 1950. P. 135.

The terms "Rus" and "Russian" should be treated with equal caution. By these terms we should not always understand "Russia" or "Russian" in its modern meaning, but often all Eastern Slavs in general: Byelorussians, Ukrainians and Muscovites.

The Muscovites, much later, adopted the name of Russians in order to embrace by this term all Eastern Slavic peoples. In reality, Muscovites, who now call themselves "Great Russians", are descended from, and have in their veins the blood of, Tartars, Mordovians, Chuvashes and Ziranians [Komi], who are wholly alien to the Slavic world. "It has been a favourite theory of Duchinski and others to hold that the name of Great Russians was in reality a misnomer, and that the bulk of the people consisted of a mixture of Finns, Tartars and other races."*

THE LITHUANIAN ANNALS WRITTEN IN MIDDLE BYELORUSSIAN

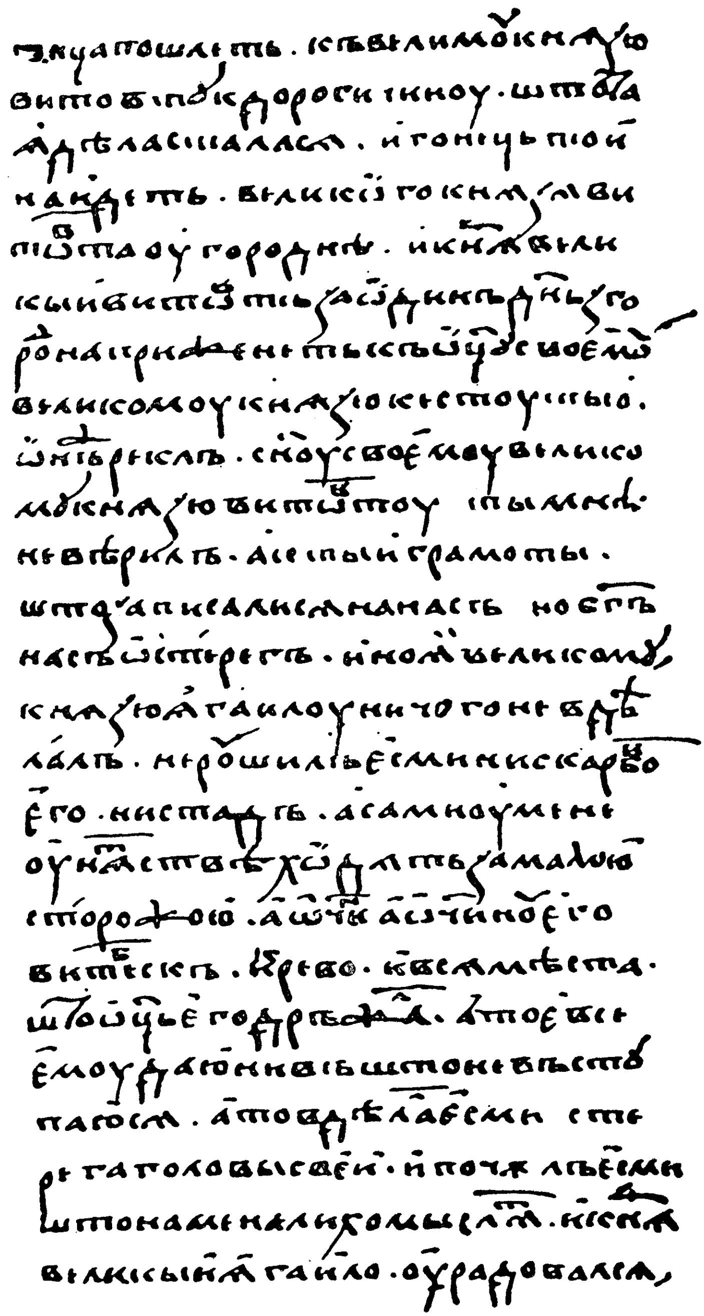
The so-called «Lithuanian Annals» [Letopisi] which cover the period 1380-1446 form a very interesting example of original secular literature in the Middle Byelorussian language. The text is composed of separate historical stories; the language being clear and concise, and often very near to spoken Byelorussian. Some of these stories are written so vividly that one has the impression of actually being a witness of the occurrences. Very often we find descriptions of natural phenomena; for example, we have a description of an eclipse of the sun on 25th March 1401 when, it is said: "at noon stars appeared in the sky as if it were night. The sun became dark and there was great fear..."

In 1434 a plague of locusts in the "Lithuanian Land" is described as follows: "...near Brest, Minsk, Sverzhen, Koydanov, Ivenets and Vilna, locusts were seen flying and destroying cornfields and grass." **

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* "RUSSIA" BY W.R.MORFILL, M.A., LONDON. 1890. P.5.

** "NARYSY PA HISTORYI BIELARUSKAJ LITERATURY. MINSK. 1956. P. 23.



FROM THE ANNALS OF AVRAAMKA. MANUSCRIPT (1495.) *)

The collection of THE ANNALS OF AVRAAMKA belongs to the oldest manuscripts of the Grand Duchy. They were

*) ACCORDING TO 'BYELORUSY' BY PROF. E.F.KARSKI. V.I. MOSCOW,1955. P.59.

written during the reign of Grand Duke Alexander by order of Bishop Joseph of Smolensk "by the hand of Avraamka, sinful servant of the Lord." In this work is described with all particulars, among others, one story about the battle which was fought in a field to the south of Tula, called "Kulikovo", or the field of woodcocks. In the battle Dmitri-Prince of Muscovy in 1380 won a splendid victory over Mamai, the Mongolian Khan, with the help of the Princes Andrei of Polotsk and Dmitri-Koributot of Bryansk. This narrative came down to us vigorously described in the Byelorussian language.

THE CHRONICLE OF BARKALABOVO. The author of this chronicle was an inhabitant of the village of Barkalabovo, but his name is unknown. In this chronicle we have a description of events limited solely to the region of Mogilew, Polotsk and the vicinity of Barkalabovo. The author only in brief references recalls the Church Union of Brest and adds a few notes about Muscovy. The chronicle describes in detail happenings of local importance, such as: weather, good and bad harvests, prices on the market and living conditions of the local population. *

ALEXANDRIA'S. In connection with the direct relationship between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Byzantium, the Near and Middle East and also Western Europe, there has come down to us translations in Byelorussian which are called «Alexandria's» – stories about the conquests of Alexander of Macedonia (356-323 B.C.) in Asia, when he brought most of the Greek cities and islands under Macedonian dominion; and also about 'Troy,' «Tristan and Isolde», «Prince Bova» and so on. The contents of «Alexandria's» are fantastical. The story starts with a description of the expeditions to Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Persia according to historical facts, but when it tells about the expedition to India, it becomes pure fantasy. The wide circulation of such literature is confirmed by the remark of F.Skorina in one of his editions of «The Bible», where he says, that his Bible was «more authentic, than 'The Alexandria's' and 'The Troy'»

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* "NARYSY PA HISTORYI BIELARUSKAJ LITERATURY. MINSK, 1956. P. 24-25.

Beside the development of church and secular literature in Byelorussian there have come to us many documents of a juridical character; "those of King Wladislaus II. (Yagello) in 1420-1423, that of Casimir given in 1468 (Sudebnik) and so called "Lithuanian Statutes" " *

"Sudebnik of Casimir" consists of codified criminal laws. With the passing of time, social and economic changes in the country demanded the establishment not only of criminal juridical norms but also civil laws. This was achieved by the compilation of the Lithuanian Statutes which appeared in three editions: 1529,1566 and 1588 ** The last edition of the Statute was printed by the brothers Luka and Kusma Mamonitch in Vilna. The Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is one of the most famous documents of that time and shows, that its authors were well acquainted, not only with the laws of their own country, but also with the laws of ancient Rome, of the Kievan Rus - "Ruskaya Pravda" of Yaroslav the Wise (11th-12th centuries) and very probably the juridical norms of many other countries. The Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania served as the basis for more recent legalization of laws introduced by Poland and Muscovy. As late as 1811 the Lithuanian Statute, a splendid ancient document of the 16th century, was translated into modern Great Russian.

The Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania reflects the high cultural level of the Byelorussian intellectuals in comparison with those of Poland and Muscovy.

Edited in Moscow in 1649 the legal code under the title "Ulozhenie of Alexis" or Book of Ordinances, according to Prof. Diakonov, "was in general copied from the

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* "POLAND" BY W.R.MORFILL. M.A., LONDON, 1893. P. 14.

** "STATUT VYELIKOGO KNYAZHESTVA LITOVSKOGO 1529 GODA". IZDATYELSTVO AKADEMII NAUK BSSR. MINSK. 1960. SEE ALSO "SLAVYANSKIJ ARCHIV" O RUKOPISYACH I IZDANIYACH PYERVOGO LITOVSKOGO STATUTA BY P.F.KRAPIVIN I JU.I.CHERNETSKAYA. IZDATYELSTVO AKADEMII NAUK SSSR, INSTITUT SLAVYANOVYEDYENIYA, MOSCOW, 1959, PP. 47-56.

Lithuanian Statute. Some of the chapters (2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 9) were almost literally taken from the Satute. There are cases where paragraphs are copied from Byelorussian without any understanding of the spirit of the text, and certain legal terms have been transfered directly because the less-developed Russian language of the Muscovites did not possess such terms. Taking into consideration the borrowing from the Statute, the importance of the "Ulozhenie" is considerably diminished as a national Muscovite-Russian code of law. It is easy to justify the view that Muscovite Law disagrees with the Muscovite justice." *

This is quite understandable because the legal norms of the Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were based not on Muscovite but on the Byelorussian law. One of the great features of this early code is that we see in it the Byelorussians wholly unaffected by those Mongolian corruptions, which afterwards vitiated Muscovites.

The Grand Duchy at that time was a purely European country, and on a level with the other European nations.

[EXTRACT FROM THE STATUTE OF 1529.

(IN MODERN BYELORUSSIAN)

§ 9. "USICH U VIALIKIM KNIAZSTVIE LITOUSKIM ADNYM PRAVAM MAJE BYCI SUDŽANA

Tako-ž žadajem i na viečnyja časy pastanaulajem, što usie našyja paddanyja, tak biednyja jak i bahatyja, da jakoje-b hramadzkaje klasy jany nie naležali dy jakoje by stanovišča jany nie zajmali, rouna i adnolkava pavodle hetaha pisanaha prava majuć być sudžany."

EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW (TRANSLATION)

§ 9. "We (the Grand Duke) also desire and order the establishment forever, that all our subjects without difference, rich or poor, or to which class they may belong, or whatever position they occupy, must be tried equally and uniformly according to this written law. "]

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* QUOTED AFTER 'BYELORUSSIA YESTERDAY AND TODAY' BY J. NAYDZYUK.

EARLY BYELORUSSIAN PRINTING

JOHN LETTOU, FRANCIS SKORINA AND OTHERS

Printing by moveable types was first practically utilized by Johann Guttenberg of Germany about the middle of the fifteenth century, and soon the knowledge of printing spread all over Europe. It was introduced into England by Caxton, who set up a printing press in Westminster in 1475. But according to English historians «John Lettou, a man of Lithuanian origin, was the first City of London printer, he had begun to print there at least as early as the year 1480» *

«It is thought that he, (John of Lithuania or Lettou) learned printing at Rome from one John Bulle, a native of Bremen, for the transitional Gothic-Roman types which Lettou used in England.» **

«Quaestiones super duodecim libros Metaphysice Aristotelis» by Antonius Andrae is his first book printed in the City of London, though John Lettou had previously printed one or more editions of an indulgence in favour of those giving aid against the Turks. This book was printed for William Wilcock in 1480.

«Abbreviamentum Statorum» and the other four books which are in the British Museum were printed about 1482 by John Lettou and William de Machlinia. The books themselves from cover to cover are an incredibly beautiful work of bookmaker's art. The name of that printer, however, is not mentioned any more after the

* "A BOOK ABOUT BOOKS" BY FREDERICK HARRISON CANON, CHANCELLOR AND LIBRARIAN OF YORK MINSTER, LONDON, 1943, P. 116.

** "AN INTRODUCTION TO HISTORICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY" BY NORMAN E. BINNS, LONDON, 1953.

year 1482 It is supposed that John Lettou left England for Cracow, where he established a printing press at which was printed (in the end of 1482) the book in Church-Slavonic under the title «Tsvyetnaya Triod» and in 1492 -«Oktoikh». It is probable that later Lettou was employed at the printing shop of Sh.Fiol, who was editing (about 1491) books in Cyrillic letters, which were found circulating in Byelorussia. *

It is quite possible because this printer was a subject of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and in the city of Cracow was the seat of Grand Duke Casimir, who at the same time was King of Poland. This Duke was a great promoter of cultural development in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

The first books in Byelorussian were printed by Francis Skorina from the City of Polotsk. We dont know much about Skorina, but it is established that he was born about 1486 in a Byelorussian family of merchants. In 1504 he entered the University of Cracow where he studied philosophy and received a Bachelor degree in 1506. The whereabouts of Skorina during the following six years is unknown, but during this time he received a degree in «Natural History» and November 9th 1512 he took examinations in the University of Padua and won a degree of Doctor of Medical Sciences. **

From Italy F.Skorina returned to his native town of Polotsk and immediately undertook the printing of books. Unfortunately he met with failure through unfavourable local conditions. Not discouraged by this adversity, after collecting some of the best manuscripts, he departed to Prague in Moravia, where, at the Collegium Lithuanorum, he established a printing press. † During the years 1516 and 1517 he edited his first book «The Psalter» in the introduction of which he wrote: «we place on the margins of the book words for humble people in the Rus lan-

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*"BYELARUS" - MAGAZIN OF THE UNION OF THE WRITTERS OF BYELORUSSIAN S S.R., NO.9, SEPTEMBER 1959, MINSK, P.31.

** "WEISSRUTHENIEN" BY E. VON ENGELHARDT. BERLIN, 1943, P. 50.

† THE COLLEGIUM LITHUANORUM WAS ESTABLISHED IN PRAGUE IN 1397.

guage for the explanation of difficult words." During the period 1517-1519 F.Skorina published 22 books under the general title "The Bible". Every one of these books contains an introduction or an epilogue. Skorina's publications for his time, are very artistic, and irreproachable from a technical point of view. His books are illustrated, as wrote Skorina himself, 'to make it easier for my brothers of Rus to understand.' Referring to the language of Skorina's Bibles, Prof. E.F. Karski wrote: "He is printing in the language easy to understand by the ordinary people. But he does not yet dare to employ purely Byelorussian language. His language possesses many aorists, irregular imperfects and Church-Slavonic peculiarities. Nevertheless basically it is national the Byelorussian language with the lingual characteristics of the ancient period of the Lithuanian State." *

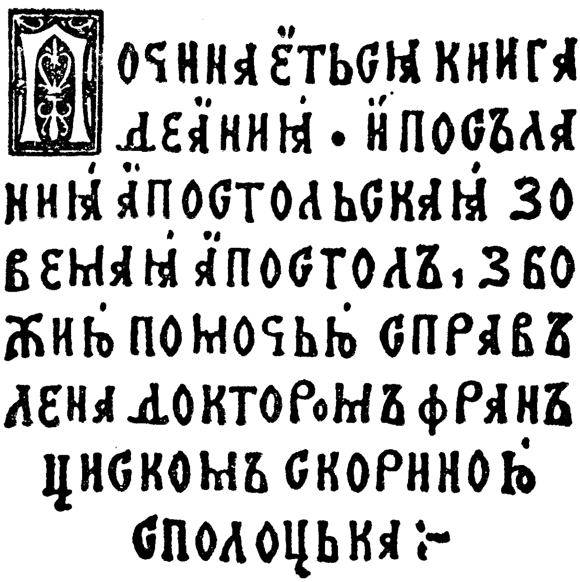


TITLE PAGE OF SCORINA'S BIBLE (PRAGUE. 1517)

Between 1520-1525 F. Skorina transferred his press to Vilna. Here was published in 1525 "Apostle" and "The Little Travel Book" (Małaja Padarožnaja Knižyca). In 1530, during the fire of Vilna, Skorina's printing press was destroyed and after 1533 we have no information about this famous printer. The printing technique of Skorina's publications served later as an example for printers not only in Byelorussia but also in other countries. Soon there were about 40 printing presses in Byelorussia.

* 'BYELORUSY' BY PROF. E.F.KARSKI. V.III. B.2. P.24.

The successor of F.Skorina in the field of printing was Vasili Tsyapinski, born in the village of Tsyapino in 1530. He established a printing press in his smallholding. There in about 1570, he edited the «Gospel» and at the same time translated it into Byelorussian. In a similar way to Skorina, Tsyapinski was prompted in his activities by love of education and by his patriotism. Both Skorina and Tsyapinski differed from their predecessors by their departure from the Church-Slavonic which was not understandable to Byelorussians and by courageously introducing forms and characteristics of spoken Byelorussian.


Починаетьсѧ книгѧ
деѧнии · и посълаѧ
нии апостольскаѧ зо
вемаѧ апостолъ, з бо
жиѭ помочью справъ
лена доктором франъ
циском скориною
с полоцька :-

FROM SKORINA'S "APOSTLE"
(VILNA 1525)

The language of Tsyapinski in this respect was nearer to spoken Byelorussian.

Contemporary with Tsyapinski was Simeon Budny, born and reared in a Greek-Orthodox family in Zabludovo, the estate of a Byelorussian nobleman, Khodkevich. S.Budny spoke Czech, Polish, Italian, Greek, Latin and Hebrew. He wrote his «Catechism» at Kletsk and printed it in Nesvizh in 1562. This work was directed against dogmatic Roman-Catholicism. The Western reformation had its influence on Budny, who in consequence accept-

ed Calvinism. His polemical publications were printed by the printing presses of Kletsk, Nesvizh, Brest and Losk. In one of his works under the title «The sinner's apologies before God» (U apraudańni hrešnaha čałavieka pierad Boham) which was published in 1562 at Nesvizh, he expresses a point of view similar to Arianism. His sharp anti-Roman religious treaties were published in Losk (in 1574, in Latin and in 1576, in Byelorussian). The importance of the activity of S.Budny is twofold: he employs in his writing the live Byelorussian language, and he was one of the first Byelorussian intellectuals, who fought for the liberation of human thought from the scholastic and religious dogmas of the Middle Ages.

To the same period belong the polemical writings of the brothers Stephan and Lawrence Zizanii from Troki near Vilna. Stephan Zizanii published in 1596 «Letter of Jeremy-Patriarch of Constantinople» and «Sermon of St. Cyrill», dedicated to Prince Ostrozhski. Lawrence Zizanii in the same year 1596, published three books which were printed by the Orthodox Brotherhood of Vilna. All of his works are of pedagogical character:



TITLE PAGE FROM THE "SLAVONIC GRAMMAR". PRINTED IN VILNA 1596

a) «Book for learning to understand Slavic writing.» It is a sort of ABC book with illustrations in the text; b) «Lexicon» - practical Church-Slavonic-Byelorussian dictionary intended for contemporary schools; c) «Slavonic Grammar» (editions: 1596, 1618, 1619 and 1627). The latter book is of high linguistical value because all grammatical rules are given in the two languages, Church-Slavonic and Byelorussian.

Generally, in the sixteenth century in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania many books were printed in Byelorussian and many printing establishments existed there.

In 1597 there was published «Apocriphas of Filalet», which also belongs to Byelorussian polemical literture.

One example of Byelorussian satirical literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is «Speech of Meleshka» which was widely distributed in hand-written copies. The author of this work is unknown. In this «Speech», the Castellan of Smolensk was sent in 1589 as a deputy to the Parliament (Seym), but it is questionable whether such a speech could be delivered in the presence of the king. The text is abundant in pictures reflecting the life of that period and the feelings of a certain part of the Byelorussian nobility which was not satisfied with the Union of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland, which led in the end to the Church Union of 1596. The author sharply denounces the policy of the Polish King but at the same time shows himself as a faithful servant of the State. «Frankly speaking–says Meleshka–it is not the king's fault but of his abvisers who are stirring up this trouble.»

Some of the people who belonged to the upper classes abandoned their native religion and disassociated themselves from the Byelorussian people; in the religious and cultural fields they moved nearer to Poland and began to forget their national character. Meleshka says: «Many of those present here are of our origin, but their bones are overgrown (as it were) with the stinking flesh of a dog.»

The peculiarity of this writing is in the complete freedom from any religious influence.

Another work no less interesting is «The Letter to Obukhovitch». The appearance of this letter is connected with the war between Poland and Muscovy during the reign of Tsar Alexis Mikhaylovitch and the fall of Smolensk into hands of the Muscovites. In command of the garrison in Smolensk was Phillip Obukhovitch, and the author not very particular in using insulting but at the same time very witty expressions «The Letter to Obukhovitch» is written in very picturesque, colourful Byelorussian and contains many proverbs. This was written in 1655 and the authorship is ascribed to a nobleman of Mozyr, Cyprian Kamunyaka.

The sufferings of the Orthodox population in the Grand Duchy was increased by the Church Union of 1596. In Byelorussia and the Ukraine peasants rose in open revolt against the religious persecution and economic exploitation on the part of the Roman-Catholic clergy and Polish and polonized Byelorussian gentry (Shlakhta). In 1609, by order of the Uniat Metropolitan of Vilna I. Patsey, all Orthodox Churches were closed. Townsmen, who revolted against this violence, were severely punished for disobedience against the king's authority. These persecutions caused the growth of resistance in literature. There appeared many pamphlets by Meletius Smotritski, but only one of them came down to us namely «Threnody» (Lament)—in 1610.

M.Smotritski was a son of the head of the Orthodox Academy at Ostrog. After leaving the Academy, Smotritski studied philosophy at the Jesuit Academy in Vilna and in 1606 went abroad and attended lectures at the University of Nuerenberg and Leipzig. In his «Threnody» he condemned large estate-owners and leading clergy who betrayed the people, denounced their own nationality and went over to the side of the Roman-Catholic Church. In 1610 an order was issued by the king forbidding the buying and selling of this pamphlet under the penalty of 5,000 gold sovereigns. Vilna town authorities were ordered to close the printing press and its manager Leontius Karpovitch was sentenced to an imprisonment of two years.

Meletius Smotritski is also author of the famous «Slavonic Grammar» which was printed in 1619 at Ivye. This grammar for a long time served as a manual not only for Byelorussians and Ukrainians but even for Muscovites. This book was edited twice in Moscow (1648,1721).

M.Smotritski was a Ukrainian who all his life was connected with cultural and social Byelorussian life.

To exactly the same period belongs Simon Polotski, who was of even greater importance to the Great Russian, than to his own Byelorussian culture. Born in Polotsk in 1629, he was educated in the Kievan Academy of Peter Mohila and was regarded as a highly educated

person. After his return to Polotsk he was appointed as a teacher in the local school of Orthodox Brotherhood. Upon reaching the age 27 he became a monk.

When Polotsk fell into the hands of the Muscovites by the treaty of Andrusovo, Tsar Alexis Mikhaylovitch invited him to live in Moscow as he was a person of very high intellectual value. Simon Polotski played a prominent part in the rise of the cultural level of Muscovy. (We shall have a detailed description of the activities of this great teacher later.)

To the ancient documents of Byelorussian literatur of the seventeenth century belong among others the following works: 'Polinodia' by Z.Kapystinski (1621), 'Diary' by F. Evlashewski (1546 - 1604), 'Diary' by S. Philipovitch (1638 - 1648), 'Chronicle' by Striykowski, 'Chronicle' by Byelski and 'Poems' by A.Rimsha.

As far as printing is concerned, the first book in Muscovy was printed in Church-Slavonic (not in Russian) by two Byelorussian printers - Peter Mstislavets and Ivan Fedorow in 1564, i.e. nearly 50 years after the first book in Byelorussia. The next year (1565) the very same printers managed to publish another book «Tchasovnik» and this was the end of Muscovite printing until a hundred years later. The savage and uncultured Muscovites regarded the art of printing as a work of the Devil and Byelorussian printers had to flee for their lives into Byelorussia, where they successfully worked at Zabludovo and Vilna.

«An embassy of the Tsar Ivan III., which in 1490 went to Germany in order to obtain the services of German technicians, invited the Luebeck printer, Bartholomaeus Gothan, to set up a press in Moscow. Gothan accompanied the embassy on their way back in 1493, and that is the last we know of him. Sixty years later a Luebeck chronicler reports that nothing had come of the intended production of Slavonic liturgical books, and that Gothan on his return journey had been murdered by the Russians.» *

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* 'FIVE HUNDRED YEARS OF PRINTING' BY S.H.STEINBERG, MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY R&R.CLARK LTD.; FIRST PUBLISHED 1955. P.51.

The second attempt to introduce printing into Muscovy was made by way of transfering to Moscow printers from Kutaino monastery near Orsha (in Byelorussia). Monks of that monastery together with their printing press were brought to Moscow (1655).

[The first book printed in Polish was edited in 1521 under the title 'Speeches of the wise King Solomon' * and the first complete Bible was edited in 1561 in Cracow. **

'The first book printed in Poland was issued in 1474 by Guenther Zainer, who set up a press in Cracow. Some forty years later a Silesian, named Hieronymus Wietor, began printing in the Polish tongue. The first complete work so published was issued in Cracow in 1521' ***

It is therefore completely erroneous to say, as Professor Halecki (a Pole) stated: 'At the beginning of the sixteenth century, when the Poles already had a number of flourishing printing-offices and before the Radzivills founded their in Lithuania, Francis Skorina, a White Ruthenian, who had graduated doctor at Padua, began to print books in his own language at Polock' (Polotsk)] †

«Printing–said S.H.Steinberg–is an integral part of the general history of civilization.»

The Social Condition and Cultural Development of the Grand Duchy

Together with the progress of cultural and educational life in the Grand Duchy came the development of other aspects of social condition in the State: jurisprudence, art, handicrafts and trade. All these were passing through different stages of dependence on the social structure with regard to political and economic conditions. Education, for example, in the 10th-13th centuries was concentrated mainly in monasteries and gradually spread to the secular

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* "POLAND" BY W.R.MORFILL. M.A., LONDON, 1893, P. 272.

** "BORDER OF EUROPE" BY PROF. ADAM ZOLTOWSKI. LONDON, 1950, P. 17.

*** "A HISTORY OF POLAND" BY GEORGE SLOCOMBE. PUBLISHED BY THOMAS NELSON & SON LTD., LONDON, 1939, P.335.

† "THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF POLAND". CAMBRIDGE, 1950, P. 285.

sphere. In the field of social relationships many changes were also taking place. The early courts, called "Kopny courts" (from the middle Byelorussian word "kapa"—plenty, a lot), were based on the custom of the crowd and its moods. Gradually attempts were made to introduce legal norms and only with the beginning of the fifteenth century was the institution of the legal court created.

The "Vartski Statute" of 1420 and the Statute of Grand Duke Yagailo of 1423 are examples of the early collection of such legal norms. But "Sudebnik of Casimir" is a more complete collection of these norms. The Statutes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (1529, 1566 and 1588), though, are the most perfect codifications of juridical laws which have come down to us from that period. *

The social life of the largely populated centers was going through a similar evolution. Small settlements, seats of local princes, were transformed into large towns and cities. (Polotsk, e.g., had at the end of the sixteenth century a population of over one hundred thousand.)

The social structure of such centers was regulated by a so called "Statute of Magdeburg", and they were governed by elected councils of burghers, craftsmen and merchants. In such towns was concentrated all the industrial life of the region.

Thanks to the centuries old contacts with Byzantium, the Near and Middle East on the one hand and Western Europe on the other, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries reached the peak of its cultural development. No wonder then that from here culture spread, and the Byelorussians were the cultural guides in Muscovy and contributed mainly to the future greatness of that state.

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* "POLAND" BY W.R.MORFILL. M.A., LONDON, 1893. PP. 14 AND 49.

BYELORUSSIANS IN MOSCOW
(SEVENTEENTH CENTURY)
(ACCORDING TO L. S. ABETSEDARSKY)

The extent of Byelorussian influence on Muscovite culture can be seen from the words of the prominent Russian linguist and specialist in Slavonic languages P. Bessonov who wrote: «The social and cultural rise in Byelorussia produced many great intellectual elements, which overflowed the limits of the Byelorussian schools in their teaching, had surpassed those of the Ukraine and served as an example in many ways to her. Far greater was the Byelorussian influence in Muscovy through the wholesale transfer of the intellectual element into the Muscovite State at the end of the seventeenth century. These learned men who went abroad in great numbers brought a reflected glory to Byelorussia and formed a sort of colonization. Ranks of colonizers moved where there was a lower degree of education with the hope of introducing their reforms. We are taking into consideration only the lasting results of this action, but every one knows how very influential they were, for example, in all Great Russia and especially in Moscow. Foreigners occupied most of the important and influential posts, from priests to the managers of the consistories, from tutors of the Tsar's family to the priors, from rectors, prefects and teachers to scientists, office managers, deacons and secretaries. All the following were reformed by Byelorussians: theology, the correction of religious texts, print, the problem of dissidents, church administration, sermons, church public and home singing, musical notes, the appearances of the houses of bishops, their private lives, carriage harness, church surplices, character, and internal order in the schools, subjects and ways of teaching, upkeep

of libraries, transcriptions and pronunciations (Church-Slavonic «h» instead hard «g»),public games shows etc. *

The booklet «Byelorussians in Moscow» **) written in Russian by L.S.Abetsedarsky, and edited in Minsk 1957, deserves special praise for its unbiased description and representation of certain historical facts and documents.

From documents quoted by the author concerning the second half of the seventeenth century it is obvious that the people who brought and spread culture in Muscovy were Byelorussians.

While in Western Europe and in Byelorussia civilization had been a gradual process, Muscovy was still barbarous, until in the seventeenth century the rulers of Muscovy endeavoured to force all at once upon their people that civilization for which a long course of years alone could prepare either body or mind.

Almost unconditional subjection of the Muscovites to age old despotic power had enormous effect on their psychology. To break down their prejudices, and to introduce new fashions from the West was the aim of the Muscovite rulers. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, little known as it was to the rest of Europe, was a model of civilization to the Muscovites.

Russian scientists have written on different occasions about Byelorussians, who emigrated or were transfered into Muscovy. I E.Zabelin extracted from the archives of the War Museum and published several interesting details about Byelorussian craftsmen, who worked in Moscow and the village of «Kolomenskoye». Similar data connected with the erection of the Voskresensky Novo-Jerusalimski monastery on the Istra river and the monastery Iversk on lake Valday are listed in the works of Rev.Superior Leonidas Kavelin.

In the book of reference of V.Zheleznov and especially of V.I.Troitsky are enumerated many refugees from Byelorussia who were working at the Tsar's Court in the ar-

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* "BYELORUSSIAN SONGS" BY P. BESSONOV. MOSCOW. 1871.

**) "BYELORUSSIANS IN MOSCOW" (17-TH CENTURY) BY L.S.ABETSEDARSKY. (IN RUSSIAN) MINSK, 1957.

moury, gold and silver smiths' and the general workshop.

N.N.Sobolev paid much attention in his work to Byelorussian sculptors who were working in Moscow.

Those writers, however, were not especially interested in the great variety of activities of the Byelorussian refugees, but only mentioned as much as was necessary to describe some of their works.

[In Muscovy of the seventeenth century Byelorussians were often called by the name of "Poles" and Byelorussian cities (Polotsk, Minsk, Vitebsk and others) as "Polish towns". Of course, those terms were used by Russian people who understood them to be citizens of Poland.

Similarly in the 15th and 16th centuries (before the Union of Lublin) in Russia it was customary to call Byelorussians by the name "Lithuanians" and Byelorussian cities—"Lithuanian cities"; this meant that they belonged to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Some of the writers following the terminology of these sources called Byelorussians—"Poles", "Lithuanians" or simply "foreigners".]

To a certain extent quite different in character was the work of S.V.Bessonov who studied the activities of the Byelorussian masters of art in Moscow and pointed out very convincingly that they had quite a large influence on the development of Russian decorative art.

The great part which was played by the Byelorussians in the development of Russian art in the second half of the seventeenth and first quarter of the eighteenth century has been shown to us by M.A.Iliin.

S.K.Bogoyavlensky points to the active part which was played by the immigrants from Byelorussia in the field of trade and craftsmanship among Moscow's population.

I.E.Grabar, A.Chinyakov and others state that Byelorussian craftsmen led in the creation of outstanding monuments of achitecture but we have only incidental data. About the influx of the Byelorussians into the Muscovite Russian State, it is impossible to establish the number of immigrants or their social composition. It is obvious that the majority of the cases were not reflected in the documents. Information concerning immigrants from Byelorussia into the Muscovite State are contained only in

Russian records. Among the most important are the register books of "Myeshtchanskaya Sloboda" (a part of the city of Moscow), and the works' register of the Royal Armoury.

Moscow Government, having certain political aims and having in mind the well being of the Russians, welcomed the Byelorussian immigrants. Byelorussians settled in the courts of the nobles and in the monasteries. Some settled in the towns. The greatest emigration took place during the period of the Polish-Muscovite war 1654-1667, when Byelorussian territory for some time was under Russian occupation. Some of the immigrants who settled in Muscovite towns and villages came to Muscovy on their own initiative. Many craftsmen were sent from Byelorussia by order of the Muscovite Government. Many of them were prisoners, mostly peasants, taken from Byelorussia during the war and settled on the estates of Russian war commanders, nobles and petty nobles. Nobleman Morozov settled on his estates over one thousand Byelorussians. Many Byelorussian peasants were taken by Princes: Kurakin, Trubetskoy and Khitrovo. A great number of incomers from Byelorussia worked on the Tsar's estate Izmailovo (near Moscow).

The Moscow Government encouraged resettlement of the Byelorussian population for yet another reason, namely—during the plague of 1654 the population of most Russian towns and villages was decimated and needed replacement.

Byelorussian Printers and other Craftsmen in Muscovy

The datas which we have in our possession give us the opportunity to investigate the fate of some of the incomers. One group which first came into Muscovy in May 1654 consisted of Byelorussian craftsmen and peasants. Nearly all of them were directed by Patriarch Nikon into Bogoroditsino — the estate belonging to the Iversky monastery on lake Valday.

Into the same monastery in 1655 were transfered monks from the Kutaino monastery near Orsha (in Byelorussia).

This monastery in the first half of the seventeenth century was one of the main centers of Byelorussian printing. The monks of Kutaino brought with them a printing shop and a great number of unfinished publications. Together with the monks from Orsha, a group of craftsmen from Kopys, Shklov, Dubrovna and other places in Byelorussia came into the Iversky monastery. Among these craftsmen were: carvers, turners, joiners and bookbinders. There is no doubt that in Orsha at the monastery printing shop worked the same bookbinders who later worked in Muscovy under the supervision of monks, imported from Orsha. In 1657 they started printing, and the same year their first book in Muscovy was published under the title «Tchasoslov». In 1658 they published a second edition of «Tchasoslov», «Ray Myshlenny» (1659), «Brashno dukhovnoye» (1660), «Akafist», «Svyattsy» and other religious books. Some of these books were illustrated. Byelorussian monks produced their own types and engravings. Monk Kallistrat even introduced some sort of «linotype» by casting whole words and sentences. Books printed by Byelorussian monks were spread widely not only in Muscovy, but in the other Rus cities. In Novgorod, for example, a permanent bookshop was organized, where books printed by these monks were sold.

This printing establishment existed in the Iversky monastery until 1665 and afterwards was taken by Patriarch Nikon to his own residence – Voskresensky Novo-Jerusalimsky monastery on the river Istra.

Here in the Voskresensky monastery in 1658 began the building of the Cathedral which by its splendour and size had to reflect the power of the Patriarch. Here worked large numbers of Byelorussian architects and craftsmen under the supervision of the Byelorussian Peter Zaborski, who died in 1665.

Voskresensky Cathedral, which is an outstanding monument of church architecture of the second half of the seventeenth century is a product of Byelorussian genius in the field of architecture and art.

From the documents of the Tsar's Armoury we know that in 1656 two men were sent to Shklov and Mogilev

in Byelorussia in order to find goldsmiths and silversmiths. In November 1657, by order of the Tsar, the agent Peter Bolotnikov was sent to Byelorussia for the same purpose. A large number of craftsmen who had settled there with their families were working at the Tsar's Court in 1658. In 1661 and 1662 the number of Byelorussian craftsmen was rapidly increasing.

Byelorussian Settlement in Moscow

In September 1672, an order of the Tsar was issued, by which a town settlement "Novo-Myeshtchanskaya Sloboda" was created especially for the Byelorussians. This settlement was governed directly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Posolsky Prikaz).

In order to collect taxes from the people, the Government from time to time took a census. Some of these censuses were published as "Materials for the History of Muscovite Merchants". Data from these documents was used in part in the works of M.V.Dovnar-Zapolski and S.K.Bogoyavlensky.

Of no less importance are the censuses taken in Moscow in the years 1676 and 1684, which have value for the study of the Byelorussian nation.

Of especial interest is the record for 1676 containing the earliest and most specific information about Byelorussians in Moscow. According to this there were in 1676, 487 families in the Byelorussian settlement in Moscow, and this number increased in 1684, to 612.

Among a great variety of Byelorussian craftsmen are listed over sixty professions.

The most active Byelorussians received responsible positions. They worked in the treasury, were representatives and trade agents abroad, tax collectors, chemists and so on. In 1678, we have 14 Byelorussian distinguished merchants in Moscow.

It is of interest, that in this period many Byelorussian immigrants were able to read and write (36%) what was unusual for the Muscovites.

One of the outstanding personalities who emigrated from Byelorussia in the seventeenth century and went to live in Muscovy was Simon Polotski (Samuel son of Emil Pyetrowski-Sitnyanovitch), a poet of great talent, dramatist, theologian, teacher and translator. He was a tutor at the Royal Court of the future Tsar Peter, and author of the statute for the first Russian Academy in Moscow.

Simon Polotski was also director and manager of the Royal or so called «Upper» printing establishment. As was previously stated, the monks, from the monastery of Kutaino (near Orsha), in 1654 transfered their printing shop into the Iversky monastery on lake Valday and there began printing. In 1665 by order of the Patriarch Nikon this press was transfered into his residence - of the Voskresensky monastery on the river Istra.

Beside printing machinery, Byelorussian monks brought with them many books previously printed by them in Orsha and Iversky monastery.

After their arrival at Voskresensky monastery, the Byelorussian monks and printers did not renew their publishing activities because at this time, in connection with the Synod of 1666-1667, Patriarch Nikon was deprived of patriarchal dignity and exiled. Some of the printers, therefore, went to Moscow and many dispersed into other towns of Muscovy.

In 1676 all printing equipment, which was stored in Voskresensky monastery, was transfered to the city of Moscow. There is documentary proof, that the «old» engraver Kallistrat was ordered to Moscow. We may here suppose that beside the engraver Kallistrat were brought to Moscow other Byelorussian printers, without whom it would be impossible to start work. By order of the Tsar directorship of the press was given to Simon Polotski, who soon installed the printing machines on the upper floor of the Royal Palace, because of the location of the establishment the press took the name of the «Upper» printing establishment or in Russian – «Vyerkhnyaya».

Among other books which were printed in the «Upper» printing press during the life of Simon Polotski are the well known: «Alphabet» (Bukvar) - 1679, «Testament of Vasily Tsar of Greece to his son Lev (Leo)» - 1680, and «Reformed Psalter» also in 1680.

The Reformed Psalter is of special interest because its author is Simon Polotski himself. It is a poetical translation of traditional Slavonic text of the psalms. This translation is of high poetical value and accuracy. Simon Polotski undertook such a difficult task because he wanted this Psalter «not only to be read in church but also to be accessable to the ordinary people in their homes and suitable for reading in either verse or prose with rhyme and melody for the enjoyment of the soul», said this great teacher.

The Psalter was very popular in Muscovy and even the prominent Russian champion of new literary movement Michael Lomonosov admitted that the poetical version of psalms by Polotski was the first book with which he learned to write poetry.

It should be stressed that the «Reformed Psalter» was printed with great art, with high quality technique, and skill in the application of two colours, with movable ornamentation. The frontispiece of the book represents a picture of the legendary author of the Psalter—the Biblical Tsar David.

After the death of Simon Polotski in the same «Upper» press of the Kremlin were printed his other works such as the: «Spiritual Dinner» and the «Spiritual Supper».

With the name of Simon Polotski (1628-1680) the early period of Russian literature closes. He had been educated at the ecclesiastical seminary of Kiev, and had thus become acquainted in some degree with the culture of the West.

The college of Kiev was established by Peter Mohila about the year 1631; he had himself studied at Paris. This patriotic man endowed the institution with some land, and sent some young monks abroad at his own expense to study the higher branches of knowledge.

The college of Kiev deserves notice on account of the

important effects which it had upon Russian literature, as it was the only place of education of any repute till the Empress Elizabeth founded the university of Moscow. The influence of the college of Kiev upon Muscovy became greater when the Muscovites, according to the Treaty of Andrusovo (1667), got that important city.

Beside Simon Polotski there were in Muscovy many other persons who came from Byelorussia and were working in the field of education as teachers, translators and writers. Nearly all headmasters in Moscow schools at that time were Byelorussians.

Activities of the Byelorussian incomers into Muscovy became known not as a result of special investigations, but from some Russian publications concerning different problems connected with the studies of the history of the Great Russian culture. It is obvious that Great Russian students would not speak about the spiritual culture of Byelorussian people.

The contribution made by Byelorussians in the field of technology and craftsmanship, also the introduction of new tools unknown to Russian craftsmen was highly valued by some Russian sciencists. For example, I.E.Zabelin pointed out that Byelorussian craftsmen through their skill and new methods caused an increase in production to a much higher level.

Prior Leonidas (Kavelin) said that Byelorussians introduced many handicrafts before unknown to the Muscovites. Of the same opinion were such learned Russians as S.B.Bessonov, N.S.Sobolev, M.A.Iliin, I.P.Yeremin and many others.

Here we should also mention that such monuments of architecture as the Solotchinsky monastery in Ryazan was built in 1689 by the Byelorussian architect Yanka Bukhvostow. The walls and towers of Voskresensky Novo-Jerusalimsky monastery on the river Istra (1658-1690), Uspyensky Cathedral in Ryazan (1693-1699), Troytsa-Lykovo church near Moscow (1704) and many others were also built by the same architect—Yanka Bukhvostow.

CONCLUSION

After this short review of Byelorussian history, I suppose the reader understands why it was that in Muscovy of the seventeenth century Byelorussians had such a high standard of culture and civilization. It is not, however, very clear why Byelorussians being on a considerably high cultural level themselves did not use their knowledge and experience in their own country, but emigrated in great numbers into Muscovy, which incidently never was friendly with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in general, and Byelorussians in particular.

The answer to this question may be found partly in the last chapters of above mentioned booklet, where Mr. L.S.Abetsedarsky briefly outlayed reasons by which Byelorussians were forced to emigrate to Muscovy. We shall try, however, to give a more detailed answer to this question. As was already stated, with the conclusion of the Union in 1569, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania ceased to exist de facto as an independent state. Byelorussian intellectuals in the first half of the seventeenth century saw their mistake, but it was too late to defend what was left of their curtailed autonomy.

Polish oppression connected with the open terror was increasing. The war between Poland and Muscovy ended and the treaty of Andrusovo (1667) was concluded. Muscovy took a part of Ukraine on the left bank of Dnyepr, the city of Kiev and a part of Byelorussia – the principalities of Smolensk and of Novgorod-Seversk. From that part of Byelorussia all the best specialists were forcibly deported into Muscovy. In order to attract a more desirable and civilized element from Byelorussia, Muscovites

were allowing privileges for refugees from that part of Byelorussia, which was still under Poland. [The conditions, in which Byelorussians were forced to live under Polish persecution on the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, were briefly described in the chapter under the title «The Religious Union of Brest 1596.»]

Consequently the chauvinistic, shortsighted and intolerant Polish policy resulted in the three partitions of Poland (1772, 1793 and 1796). Her institutions and laws ceased to exist; in Galicia the Austrian civil code prevails; in Posen - the Prussian Landrecht. In Poland under Russian Government from the year 1807 the code of Napoleon has prevailed; in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania the Lithuanian Statute was changed into Russian law, by an order (ukaz) of June 25th, 1840.

At the time of the fall of Poland, all Byelorussian territory was under the rule of Muscovites, and from then on had to endure the new occupant, but the system of the occupation itself remained such as is reflected by the following Latin proverb: «Cujus regio-ejus religio.»

It is true, however, that all Byelorussians of the Orthodox faith under Muscovites were equal in their civil rights with all subjects of the PAR EXCELENCE Orthodox Muscovite State. On the contrary, all Uniats and Roman Catholics were subjugated to a limitation of their rights. Furthermore, all Uniats were forcibly returned to Orthodoxy by way of «administrative methods». Uniat (Greek Catholic) religion was officialy banned, and Roman Catholics were forbidden to buy real estates, and selling was permitted only to those of the Orthodox faith.

Simultaneously all Byelorussians without any exception: Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Uniats were subjugated to the systematical russification. Soon all Byelorussian schools were closed, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests could preach only in Russian.

Orthodox clergy who were sent en masse from Central Muscovy into Byelorussia, along with their religious duties were expected to be a medium of russification and gendarmes of Tsarist Russia.

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